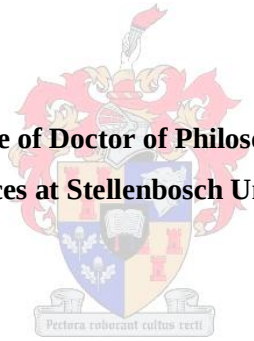
Zimbabwean Women Writers
from 1950 to the Present: Re-creating Gender Images

by

Faith Mkwesha



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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any other university for a degree.

Signature: Faith Mkwesha Date: 23 February 2016

ABSTRACT

My thesis focuses on Zimbabwean women as writers and thus on women as producers, contesters and negotiators of gendered images, and the ways in which they write gender identities in and of the nation. I have selected Zimbabwean women-authored texts written in English, from 1950 to 2015. The fictional texts are set in five historical periods – pre-colonial and colonial incursions and the first *chimurenga* (war) from 1890-1897, colonial rule from 1898-1966, the second *chimurenga* 1966-1978, independence and the first two decades of self-rule from 1980-1999, and the third *chimurenga*? and the Zimbabwe crisis from 2000 to the present – each of which is marked by important gender (re)configurations. My delineation of the five historical periods refers to the setting, not production, of the primary texts. The periodization approach makes evident the significant shifts in gender relations and roles in the home and the nation, and the ways in which narratives by women writers reproduce, inscribe, recreate, subvert or contest these gendered positions. Also, organizing primary texts according to their temporal setting depicts how gendered images are composed in each era, which is then revisited by later generations of writers to re-create the images. The women writers revisit the past to raise pertinent issues about the present state of the nation. I argue for the duality of gender, because this perspective makes evident how gendered subjects are produced, showing that women's identities and roles are shaped in relation to those of men and vice versa. I argue for the category of woman in Chapter 1, and read the texts as fictional narratives written by women because this approach shows how Zimbabwean women writers contest and challenge gender images created by settlers and nationalists from different ideological perspectives, and hold up mirrors to their gendered societies, while constructing new self-images along with new constructions of masculinity. Throughout the thesis I read closely the texts as laboratories where gender is conceived, practised, tested, discarded, and re-defined. In the Introduction Chapter 1, I also argue for the interconnectedness of sex, race, ethnicity, class and politics in the constitution of gender subjectivities. Using the house trope, the quest motif and the filth trope I analyse themes of inclusion, exclusion and belonging.

There are seven chapters: Chapter 1 the introduction, Chapter 2 focuses on the woman-hero and the weeping hunter, Chapter 3 focuses on the questing rebellious modern woman and the ineffective husband, absent father, jealous husband and possessive boyfriend, Chapter 4 redefines the concept of hero to inscribe women liberation heroines in the nation, while challenging the authenticity of the self-glorifying nationalist male hero, Chapter 5 focuses on liberated genders, Chapter 6 focuses on the resilient woman and the vulnerable man, and Chapter 7 is the Conclusion. The questions with which I approach the five historical moments represented in my primary texts are: How do women writers renegotiate, contest and re-inscribe gendered images located in these five historical periods? What role do women as writers and characters play in the construction and redefinition of their images and

those of their male counterparts? What kind of alternative avenues open up for writers to represent women's interests? In what ways do these representations of gender participate in the (re)imagining of the nation?

OPSOMMING

My proefskrif ondersoek die rol van Zimbabwiese vroue as skrywers, en die maniere waarop hulle die geslagsidentiteite van die nasie verbeel en verbeeld. Hierdie vroueskrywers vervaardig sekere beelde van geslagtelikheid, en terselfdertyd bestry en onderhandel hulle oor die beelde wat reeds bestaan. Ek fokus op tekste wat deur Zimbabwiese vroue in Engels geskryf is. Hierdie fiktiewe stories omskryf vyf historiese tydvakke: die pre-koloniale en koloniale invalle, asook die eerste *chimurenga* (oorlog) van 1890-1897, die tydperk van koloniale bedwing van 1898-1966, die tweede *chimurenga* 1966-1978, onafhanklikheid en die eerste twee dekades van selfbestuur van 1980-1999, en die sogenaamde derde *chimurenga* en die Zimbabwiese krisis van 2000 tot die hede. Elkeen van hierdie tydperke word deur belangrike (her)konfigurasies van geslagtelikheid gekenmerk. My uiteensetting van die vyf tydperke verwys na die tyd-ruimtelike plasing van die stories, en nie na die tydperk waarin die tekste vervaardig is nie. So 'n groepering volgens periode beklemtoon die beduidende verskuiwings in geslagsrolle en verhoudings binne die huis asook die nasie. Dit onderstreep die maniere waarop narratiewe deur vroueskrywers hierdie geslagsposisies reproduseer, beskryf, omskep, ondermyn of bestry. Die groepering van die tekste volgens temporale ligging gee 'n aanduiding van die maniere waarop geslagtelikheid in elke era voorgestel word, en deur latere skrywers heromskryf word. Die skrywers keer terug na die verlede, ten einde pertinente vrae oor die huidige stand van die nasie daar te stel. Ek voer aan dat geslagtelikheid dualisties is, omdat so 'n perspektief die maniere waarop *gendered* subjekte voorgestel word, duidelik maak. Sodoende sien mens dat vroue-identiteite en -rolle geskep word in verhouding met die van mans, en vice versa.

Daar is sewe hoofstukke in die proefskrif: In die inleiding sit ek my teoretiese grondslag uiteen. In hoofstuk twee fokus ek op die vroulike-held en die wenende jagter. Hoofstuk drie slaan ag op die uitbeelding van die soekende, rebelse moderne vrou in teenstand met die onbekwame of jaloerse man, die afwesige vader en die besitlike kerel. In hoofstuk vier kyk ek na die manier waarop die konsep van die held herdefinieer word om vroulike vryheidsvegters as nasionale helde in te sluit, terwyl die geloofwaardigheid van die selfverheerlikende nasionalistiese manlike held in twyfel getrek word. Hoofstuk vyf fokus op geslagsbevryding, hoofstuk ses vergelyk die beelde van die sterk vrou en die kwesbare man, en hoofstuk sewe is die slot. My analise van die vyf voorgestelde historiese tydperke word gelei deur die vraag van hoe vroueskrywers die voorstellings van geslagtelikheid wat in hierdie vyf tydperke uitgebeeld word, ondersoek en omskryf. Wat is die rol van vroulike skrywers en karakters in die daarstelling en herdefiniering van die beeld van vroue en hul manlike ekwivalente? Wat is die alternatiewe maniere waarop vrouebelange uitgebeeld kan word? Hoe dra hierdie uitbeeldings van geslagtelikheid by tot die (her)verbeelding van die nasie?

Ek fokus hoofsaaklik op die idee van “vrou” as kategorie. Ek voer aan dat daar 'n onderlinge verbinding is tussen seks, ras, etnisiteit, klas en politiek in die daarstelling van geslagtelikheid. Ek lees deurgans die tekste as laboratoriums, waar geslagtelikheid voorgestel, beoefen en getoets word, mee weggedoen word, en heromskryf word. Hierdie aanslag laat my toe om te wys hoe Zimbabwiese vroueskrywers geslagsbeelde wat deur die uiteenlopende ideologiese perspektiewe van setlaars en nasionaliste geskep is, bestry en betwis. Hierdie skrywers hou 'n spieëlbeeld vir hul *gendered* samelewings op, terwyl hulle nuwe beelde van self, asook van manlikheid skep. Deur ag te slaan op die gebruik van die troop van die huis, die motief van die soektog, en die troop van vuilgoed in hierdie tekste, analiseer ek tema's van insluiting, uitsluiting, en saamhorigheid.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my late father, William K. Mukwesha, my children, Evans Nyasha Manyonga, Tanaka J. Manyonga, Tavonga J. Manyonga, Kudzaishe W. Manyonga, and Panashe A. Manyonga.

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Chara chimwe hachitswanyi inda (One finger does not squash a louse)

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shape this research. I am immensely thankful to my colleagues in the English and Cultural Studies Department at the University of the Free State for their understanding and support.

Chapter 2 of this thesis has appeared as a book chapter “Representing Nehanda: Writing back to Colonialism’s “frozen image” and the Male Nationalist Tradition” (ed. Helen Cousins and Pauline Dodgson-Katiyo). *Emerging Perspectives on Yvonne Vera*. Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2012.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction: Women authoring gender

"…we must not divide things off, must not compartmentalize" (Doris Lessing)[1]

"Women write about the things that move them" (Tsitsi Dangarembga)[2]

"A woman writer must have an imagination that is plain stubborn, that can invent new gods and banish ineffectual ones" (Yvonne Vera)[3]

1.1 Introduction

This thesis focuses on the negotiation and recreation of gender images by Zimbabwean women writers, and the ways in which they write gender identities in and of the nation from 1950 to 2015 in fictional texts set during five historical periods: pre-colonial and colonial incursions and the first *chimurenga*[4] from 1890 –1897; colonial rule from 1898 – 1966; the second *chimurenga* from 1966 –1979; independence and the first two decades of self-rule from 1980-1999; and, the third *chimurenga*[?], including the Zimbabwe crisis from 2000 to the present. Each period is marked by important gender (re)configurations. The thesis focuses on Zimbabwean women as writers and thus on women as producers and contesters of gendered images. The questions with which the thesis approaches the five historical moments represented in its primary texts are: How do women writers renegotiate, contest and re-inscribe gendered images located in these five historical periods? What role do women as writers and characters play in the construction and redefinition of their images and those of their male counterparts? What kind of alternative avenues open up for writers to represent women's interests? In what ways do these representations of gender participate in the (re)imagining of the nation?

1.1.1 Why women writers?

I use the category of "woman" despite the fact that gender theorists have challenged its coherence and singularity (Butler 1990). I find the category of woman useful as a way of delineating my

[1] Lessing, Doris. *The Golden Notebook*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, (1962) xi-xv.
[2] Flora Veit-Wild. "Women write about the things that move them." Interview with Tsitsi Dangarembga."*Matatu*. 6 (1987) 100-108.
[3] Yvonne Vera: *Opening Space: Contemporary African Women's Writing*. Zimbabwe: Baobab (1999) 1.
[4] *"Chimurenga"* means liberation struggle. Zimbabwe has had three successive *chimurengas* – that is, three phases of the liberation struggle or war (Muponde & Primorac, "Versions of Zimbabwe xiii). The first one was the 1896 resistance against British settlement by the Shona people (later joined by the Ndebele) which was led by Nehanda and Kaguvi, the second was the war of liberation which led to independence and the third was the violent land seizures and redistribution called *jambaja* in Shona.

study, even though Butler says, "If one "is" a woman, that is surely not all one is" (*Gender Trouble* 4), but are we not to speak about gender? I keep the category because I agree with Moi's analysis that Butler's theory explains the production of gender, but does not "tell what we ought to do once gender has come into being" and how to justify women's position in society, or set out principles for a just and equitable society or help explain why "freedom is the highest personal and political value" ("I am Not a Woman Writer" 263). I think it is important to acknowledge the difference between women writers and male, a difference that emanates from different positioning in society, biology, visions, desires and passions. Moi asks a pertinent question that inspires me to keep the category of women: "Why is the question of women and writing such a marginal topic in feminist theory today?" (259). Thus, this thesis follows Moi, maintaining that "a woman writer writes as a woman, not as a generic woman, but as the (highly specific and idiosyncratic) woman she is" (268). This thesis seeks to capture the specificities and idiosyncracies of woman as writer, and to analyse how this influences the literary male and female images she creates. The category of woman enables me to explore the ways women in and from Zimbabwe hold up mirrors to their gendered societies, while constructing new self-images, along with new constructions of masculinity. I am interested in "women and aesthetics and creativity within feminist theory" (Moi 259).

The second epigraph is from Dangarembga, the first black woman to write a novel (*Nervous Conditions*) in English in Zimbabwe. *Nervous Conditions* was well received, and Lessing said, "Many good novels written by men have come out of Africa, but few by black women. This is the novel we have been waiting for [...]"[5] In an interview with Veit-Wild, Dangarembga defines feminine writing as "women writing about the things that move them….Female writing comes from the consciousness of being a woman and the problems that arise as a result of that" ("Women Write" 105). She argues for women as a category, and positions herself as a woman. She situates herself amongst black feminists: "The white Western feminism does not meet my experiences at a certain point, the issues of me as a black woman. The black American female writers touch more of me than the white ones" (Veit-Wilde 106). She states that she wrote *Nervous Conditions* from a feminist consciousness, to create models and map alternative escape routes for young black women (*Nervous Conditions* 211, Rosemary Marangoly George and Helen Scott "An Interview" 315 -6). Her essential feminist position has shifted. She states that she "has come a long way in her thinking from dichotomising the issues or dividing up the world by gender, because you cannot ignore the other powers that really inform life itself" (Marangoly George and Scott 313). This ideological shift is evident in *The Book of Not*, the sequel to *Nervous Conditions*, where she focuses on the entanglement of the personal and politics, redefining *unhu-*

[5] Lessing's comments are on the first page, titled "About Nervous Conditions". Dangarembga, Tsitsi. *Nervous Conditions*. Oxfordshire: Ayebia Clarke Publishing Ltd, 2004 (1988).

ubutnu, a Southern African philosophy of reciprocity, and positioning herself as a nationalist feminist (Rooney "Interview" 61). It is worthwhile to note that the shift happened at a time when the land invasions were taking place in Zimbabwe and the unfolding crisis was deepening. *The Book of Not* was published 2006.

The third epigraph is from Yvonne Vera's introduction to a collection of short stories (*Opening Spaces*). The epigraph suggests that women must be brave to deconstruct and destroy oppressive images and create new ones that are liberating. Vera situates herself as an African woman writing with a feminist agenda (Bryce "Interview" 222, Primorac "The Place" 376-7). She says her act of writing is "structured around a particular idea of self ….and body, or structures in the society or independence" and "making an argument about female identity" (Primorac 376). She states that when she wrote *Nehanda* she was "conscious of the feminist elements" (Bryce, "Interview with Yvonne Vera" 222). Vera states that women "without power to govern, often have no platform for expressing their disapproval….Words become weapons" (2). The quotation suggests that writing is an act of fighting back to oppressive patriarchal conditions and images. She states that writing "offers a moment of intervention" (*Opening Spaces* 3) for women to negotiate their position and envision new possibilities for men and women to build an inclusive nation.

Female critics have pointed out the lack of critical attention to African women's writing and the misrepresentation of womanhood in the male literary tradition (Florence Stratton, *Contemporary* 1994). Consequently, focusing on Zimbabwean women writers is also a personal political project. I seek to position this thesis as an intellectual space to discuss Zimbabwean women's struggles and successes, and hopefully bring them into visibility. There has been a marked dearth of literary criticism on female-authored Zimbabwe literature, even though Zimbabwe has produced some of Africa's most prolific women writers during both the colonial and postcolonial eras. While there have been fragmented book-length studies based on individual writers such as Lessing (Thorpe, *Doris Lessing's Africa* 1978, Sage 1983), Dangarembga (Willey and Triber, *Emerging* 2002) and Vera (Muponde and Taruvinga, *Sign* 2002, Cousins and Dodgson-Katiyo, *Emerging* 2012), this thesis seeks to give a critical survey of selected Zimbabwean women's literature written in English that extends from Lessing's first novel published in 1950 to Bulawayo's novel published in 2013. The other studies forego the comparative approach that informs my research, which enables me to produce broader conclusions about women's literary contributions, and their engagements with gendered images, rather than ones that hinge on the idiosyncratic visions of individual writers.

1.1.2 Selected texts

This thesis is looking at how Zimbabwean women writers have "swallowed history" to counteract their "swallowing by history" in the chosen texts (Vera, *Opening* 2). Pierre Bourdieu states that "history is a struggle of the definition of reality that involves processes of selecting and discarding" (1977 cited in Wilson-Tagoe 160). In *Opening Spaces*, Vera says, "Africa has erred in its memory" (2), and African women's contributions to national events like the liberation struggle have been swallowed by nationalist historiography (Lyons, *Guns and Guerrilla Girls* 2004, Samuelson, *Remembering* 2007).

I have chosen texts that enable me to unpack the relation between the two constructs, femininity and masculinity, in the transitional moments represented. The writers of the selected texts use the house trope to challenge and recreate gender relations and power dynamics between men and women in the domestic space and the nation, and envision a better future for women and men in a harmonious and inclusive home and nation. The fourteen primary texts are: Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* (1950), *Martha Quest* (1952), and A *Proper Marriage* (1954); Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *The Book of Not* (2006); Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda* (1993), *Butterfly Burning* (1998), *The Stone Virgins* (2002); Alexandra Fuller's *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* (2001); Freedom Nyamubaya's short story "That Special Place" (1995); Valerie Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006); Petina Gappah's *An Elegy for Easterly* (2009); Virginia Phiri's *Highway Queen* (2010), and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013). Some novels, short stories and testimonies that I have not mentioned here are referred to in the discussion. While, Violet Kala's *Waste Not Your Tears* (1993), and Masitera's *The trail* (2000) and *Now I can play* (1999), register discontent with patriarchy, they have been left out because they do not depict the re-creation of gender images, and the female characters do not have questing characteristics. Irene Sabatini's *The Boy Next Door* (2009), Sue Nyathi's *The Polygamist* (2012), Sekai Nzenza Shanda's *Zimbabwean Woman: My Own Story*, *Songs to an African Sunset: A Zimbabwean Story* (1997), Novuya Rosa *Tshuma's Shadows* (2012) and Kristina Rungano's *A Storm is Brewing* (1984) have not been included because they do not focus on the thematic concerns of this thesis.

My delineation of the five historical periods refers to the setting, not production, of the primary texts. Organizing primary texts according to their temporal setting enables me to explore how gendered images are composed in each era, which are then revisited and recreated by later generations of writers, and how women writers of the present "delve into the past in order to raise pressing questions about the nation at present" (Samuelson, *Remembering* 51). Ogundipe-Leslie recommends that "we should be aware of the need to 'periodize' African history adequately"

when examining gender relations (*Re-creating Ourselves* 32). Periodization will help "to discover … how men and women experienced life in other historical periods" (Moi 268). Butler says "gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts" (*Gender Trouble* 4), so an historical approach will help trace how gender is constituted in the periods represented. The setting of the chosen texts is "always against the backdrop of a particular time" (Muponde and Taruvinga 223), the time revisited retrospectively by some writers, so periodization enables me to trace how gender images and symbols are mobilised by Zimbabwean literary society for specific purposes.

In *Nehanda* (1993), Vera retrieves orality and spirit possession to launch her politics of resistance (Vambe, "Spirit Possession"). She revisits the past, the first *chimurenga* revolt, to recuperate women's role in storytelling, use of words to shape the future, and their physical participation in the rebellion by recreating the image of the rebellious defiant spiritual woman-hero Nehanda, of Zimbawean myths, and challenging violent nationalist masculinity by recreating the image of the weeping-hunter Kaguvi, a Zimbabwean war legend. Vera says she wanted, "ordinary women in Zimbabwe to know that there was nothing new in what they were attempting to do", that there was nothing new in women fighting for liberation (Bryce, "Interview with Yvonne Vera" 222). I read postcolonial Zimbabwean literary women and their creators as women of the future, as envisioned by Nehanda through the image of the whirlwind: "It is always in a state of creation, and of being born: the legend-creating wind gives new tongues with which to praise it, and new languages with which to cross the boundaries of time" (Vera, *Nehanda* 93). I propose that Zimbabwean women writers are the women envisioned by Vera's *Nehanda* in her prophecy, "creat[ing] new songs to help clear the path into new lives" (93). Postcolonial Zimbabwean literary women and their creators "claim their inheritance" of resistance (*Nehanda* 4). Vera, in particular, claims the right to authorship through Nehanda. She says when writing her first novel Nehanda, "I felt as if I were a spirit as I wrote it. I felt in the end it came out of a state of possession. I had asked her in my traditional manner of asking – getting up before dawn to ask for guidance – and she had visited (Bryce, "Interview with Yvonne Vera" 222). Following Vera, I position Nehanda as the indigenous ancestor, mapping out Zimbabwe women's literary tradition of creativity through oral words, prophecies and visions of the future, and an inspiration for literary women and their creators to fight for freedom, as "words became weapons" (*Opening Spaces* 2). The Kaguvi image, in turn, opens the way for the new man who can re-build the nation.

The periodization approach also enables me to engage with previously unexplored intersections between, for instance, Lessing's representation of colonial domesticity and gender regimes on rural farms in *The Grass is Singing* (1950), in the white suburbs of the 1940s *Martha Quest*

(1952), in *A Proper Marriage* (1954), and Vera's representation of township domesticities and gender regimes of the same era in *Butterfly Burning* (1998), though written half a century later. I suggest that, even though Vera does not mention Lessing as an inspiration for her writing, the similarity of subjects, themes and characters echoes Lessing. Thus, I position Lessing as a literary foremother of subversive women's written literature in Zimbabwe. The maternal voice runs throughout their texts and the thesis.

1.1.3 Chapter outline

The chapter outline is structured around the historical represented periods, their thematic concerns and their related gender images. Chapter 1 examines representations of the colonial incursion (the arrival of the first settlers in the late 19th century) and of the 1896 resistance in the first *chimurenga* led by Nehanda and Kaguvi (two spirit mediums executed by the colonial authorities), focusing on Vera's *Nehanda* (1993) and *The Stone Virgins* (2002). I first discuss representations of Shona women's power and authority before the encroachment of colonialism. Then, I analyse how the Nehanda spirit medium transcends gendered hierarchy and takes up a position of authority during the first c*himurenga*, by comparing representations of her and of Kaguvi (the hunter-warrior). Finally, I explore how both Nehanda and Kaguvi have functioned as nationalist symbols in Mugabe's government. The implications of Charwe/Nehanda's dual character as woman/spirit medium are analysed, along with her appropriations by nationalist myths-makers.

Chapter 2 presents a comparative analysis of representations of masculinities and femininities in colonial Zimbabwe by focusing on Lessing's farm and suburban domesticities in *The Grass is Singing* (1950), *Martha Quest* (1952), and A *Proper Marriage* (1954), as well as Vera's, township domesticity in *Butterfly Burning* (1998). The chapter engages with themes of domesticity, marriage and motherhood.

Chapter 3 focuses on narratives of returning to the scene of the liberation war, analysing the representation of men and women in and of the struggle during the second *chimurenga* in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *The Book of Not* (2006), Alexandra Fuller's *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* (2001), and Freedom Nyamubaya's short story "That Special Place" (2007). Nyamubaya returns to the liberation war-training camps to deconstruct the nationalist male hero. Dangarembga aesthetically reconstructs the liberation war to inscribe ordinary men and women's lived experiences during that war. Fuller presents a white Rhodesian girl's experiences of growing up under UDI and the second *chimurenga* in *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*. The narrative reclaims white Zimbabwean identity, working with discourses of

belonging and victimhood. These women writers return to the war to redefine the concept of a hero and to inscribe women heroes in the history of the nation. Also, the chapter considers how representations of gender during the struggle contribute to the drawing and redrawing of gender boundaries in the future independent state.

Chapter 4 compares the representation of liberated genders at independence and in the first two decades of independence, focusing on portrayals of the demobilization process, new national identities forged during the nation-building project and the failure of reconciliation. The focal texts are Vera's *The Stone Virgins* (2002) and Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* (2006). The chapter traces the ways in which women writers grapple with the re-domestication of women during the first decade of independence and analyses their representations of women as living in the aftermath of war, and under authoritarian rule, patriarchy and repression, despite the "official" liberties afforded them in the new political dispensation. I analyse the representations of women and men as both victims and perpetrators of the repressions in Matabeleland by ZANU-PF in the early 1980s, and the ways in which women writers and characters respond to persistent political repressions, including the "clean up" operation of urban women which coincided with the Matabeleland massacres.

Chapter 5 analyses textual representations of the present, that is, of the current gendered political crisis, in order to explore whether it has created fissures in the social order which allow women to be more assertive and to forge new gendered identities, or whether it has further constrained them. Also, I demonstrate how the socio-economic and political order has impacted on constructions of masculinity and femininity, focusing on resilient women and vulnerable traumatised images of men. The focal texts are NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013), Virginia Phiri's *Highway Queen* (2010), Petina Gappah's *An Elegy for Easterly* (2009) and Valerie Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006).

1.1.4 Delineated historical periods

I outline briefly the five pivotal historical moments that I have delineated. But, let me hasten to say that I am not implying that the texts mirror history, nor am I arguing for a linear understanding of history. Wilson-Tagoe states that history is important because novels present a different relation to gender by creating a critical difference between realities that regulate it, in their figuration in imaginative literature ("History" 160). The "dynamics of struggle, dissent and rupture may be written into gender, and power relations re-imagined and transformed….The novels under discussion "create narratives out of history rather than narratives of history….Their historicising effect derives from their fluid re-invention of past memories" ("History" 160).

The British Pioneer Column of Cecil John Rhodes invaded pre-colonial Zimbabwe in the 1890s, and Africans resisted. The Ndebele King Lobengula was defeated in 1893. The Mashonaland and Matabeleland revolt during the first *chimurenga* of 1896-7 led by Nehanda and Kaguvi was violently suppressed and the leaders hanged (Ranger, *Revolt*). British minority rule was in control for sixty years. The rise and fall of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, formed in 1953-1963, created disillusionment for educated Africans who had faith in a multiracial society. When Ian Douglas Smith became prime minister of Southern Rhodesia, he and his party, the Rhodesian Front, rebelled against Britain to thwart reforms to include blacks in government and severed all ties with Britain. Smith announced the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (U.D.I.) from Britain in 1965. African nationalists rejected U.D.I. and launched the liberation war. This led to a protracted war, the second *chimurenga* (1966-1979).

The war was led by the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), supported by the independent African states of Zambia, Mozambique, Tanzania and Botswana, as well as China and the Soviet Union. The war ended in 1979 when the Lancaster House agreement in Britain led to British-supervised majority elections in 1980, which were won by ZANU, and Robert Mugabe became the first prime minister of Zimbabwe. The celebrations were short-lived as violence broke out in Matebeleland in 1983. Distrust ruled on both sides, Mugabe tried to consolidate power, ruthlessly crushing the ZIPRA dissident rebellion in Matebeleland. Mugabe's government also targeted some ex-ZIPRA guerrillas and they fled back into the bush to take refuge in the hills. Ranger briefly explains the unfolding of the crisis: Mugabe's government deployed armed forces, set up road blocks and imposed curfews ("History has its ceiling" 207). The Fifth Brigade, nicknamed *Gukurahundi*,[6] were deployed in Matebeleland North, and in February 1984 they were deployed to Matebeleland South. Nkomo and his former commanders and the leadership of ZAPU were imprisoned. The report on the 1980 disturbances in Matebeleland and Midlands" compiled by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (March 1997) says more than 20,000 civilians were killed.[7] The violence ended with the signing of the unity accord in 1987 between ZANU and ZAPU and the formation of the Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF).

The "Unreconciled citizenship" (Chan, "Memory" 369), and the "Unfinished business" (Hammar et al. *Zimbabwe's Unfinished*) culminates in "the Third *Chimurenga*", the third and last instalment

[6] In Shona it means the early rain which washes away the chaff before the spring rains.

[7] See "Report on the 1980 disturbances in Matebeleland and Midlands" compiled by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, March 1997. Alexander at al. *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forest' of Matebeleland*. Oxford: James Currey: Harare: Weaver Press (2000).

of the liberation struggle first mounted in the 1890s (Primorac and Muponde, *Versions* xiii) in Zimbabwe's patriotic history (Ranger, "Rule by historiography" 220). "The Zimbabwe crisis" (Hammar et al., Raftopoulos, "Unreconciled Differences" viii) was precipitated by the rejected constitutional referendum in February 2000. Fearing losing power to the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) of Morgen Tsvangirai in the June 2000 parliamentary elections, Robert Mugabe promised "retaliation in volatile language," to allegedly unpatriotic opposition, white farmers and Western countries (Barry, *Zimbabwe the Past* 13). War veterans, unemployed party youths and party members began *jambaja* (a series of violent farm take-overs). The authoritarian nationalist state of Mugabe repudiated the reconciliation policy of 1980, and anti-colonial and anti-imperial discourse sharpened. Genuine land grievances were manipulated for political mileage, and nation-wide campaigns for land were used as a strategy to win back support. MDC supporters and leaders and all white farmers were labelled sell-outs, and the third *chimurenga* was in full force, led by war veterans. However, some war veterans ZNWLVA, civil society and MDC spoke out against it. Despite the violence, MDC won 57 seats and ZANU PF 62 seats in the June 2000 parliamentary elections, and the Mugabe government was losing legitimacy. A jewel of Africa (Julius Nyerere, cited in *Zimbabwe the Past* 19) became inflation-soured, supermarkets were empty and queues for food became the norm. In the 2008 elections Mugabe lost to Morgan Tsvangirai. The results were not released for one month, and when they were finally released they indicated that Tsvangirai did not win the majority required to avoid a second round. The second election was marred with violence that led to Tsvangira's withdrawal. Having won the one man contest Mugabe installed himself as President again, but the violence and the result were condemned internationally and sanctions against Zimbabwe were put in place. The economy collapsed and ZANU-PF and the MDC were forced into a unity government negotiated by South Africa in 2009. This ended in 2013 with another contested illegitimate government installed. The crisis continues to unfold.

1.2 Analytic and theoretical frameworks and points of departure

1.2.1 Theories of gender, postcolonial feminism and intersectionality

The thesis reflects on the heterogeneous national polity, undertaking a gendered analysis of the nation, by drawing on a combination of gender, postcolonial feminist, and intersectional critical theories to analyze the representation of gender relations, visions and perceptions by Zimbabwean women writers. Gender theories reveal that gender is a cultural and historical construction (Wilson-Tagoe 2003, Butler 1990, Scott 1986), which is imperative to consider when analysing gender images and relations in Zimbabwean women-authored novels. This thesis follows Butler in maintaining that gender is a social "construction" (*Gender Trouble* 190), and Scott's definition

that "gender is a constitutive element of social relationships" and "a primary way of signifying relationships of power" ("Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" 1067). Gender is not fixed, hence constantly open to reconstruction through repetitive performance (Butler 191) and socio-political historical changes (Scott 1986). This study posits that gender is relationally and reciprocally constituted, hence, open to renegotiation and redefinition due to socio-economic and political historical changes. As such, the historical periods will enable me to analyse the causes of gender (re)configuration in each.

I take Lessing's caution in the first epigraph "not to divide things," Butler's claim that gender is perfomative (*Gender Trouble* 191) and Scott's definition that "gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (Scott 1067). Consequently, the study focuses more broadly on gendered images rather than on images of women. The dual approach (masculine and feminine) enables me to analyse how women's identities and roles are shaped in relation to those of men and vice versa. Muchemwa and Muponde also argue that "debates about gender can only be complete and meaningful when masculinity is brought under close scrutiny as it abuts discussions on genders" (*Manning the Nation* xv); thus the thesis also engages with constructions and representations of masculinity, and the ways in which women writers are producing new gendered positions for both male and female characters while "subverting normative notions of gender" (ibid xxi). I will draw from Morrell's masculinity theories to analyse ideal masculinity model envisioned by women writers (*Changing Men in Southern Africa*) and Muchemwa and Muponde's *Manning the Nation*. In short, I interrogate from a dual perspective how gendered subjects are produced, the ways in which literary narratives by women writers reproduce, inscribe, recreate, subvert or contest these gendered positions.

Postcolonial feminist literary theory enables me to analyse the complex social relations, including gender relations intersecting with race, sexuality and class in women's represented lives, and to examine the varied experiences of both women and men in this (post)colonial patriarchal state. Central to the study, then, are the ways in which colonial and postcolonial femininities and masculinities are informed by and inform the "complex process of construction of national subjectivity" (Lewis and Mills, *Feminist Postcolonial Theory* 3, Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, Nfah-Abbenyi, *Gender in African Women's Writing*). As such, I analyse how Zimbabwean women writers critique the colonial and postcolonial patriarchy for failing the nation and its citizens in different ways. The study interrogates how Zimbabwean women writers are critiquing the historical legacy of gender inequality, injustice and exclusionary citizenship by colonial and postcolonial nationalists, while, examining the literary strategies they use to articulate the persistent failure to construct homely homes and inclusive hospitable

postcolonial nation-state. Also, I analyse how the literary women and their creators reclaim national belonging, recreate and re-inscribe rebellious and liberating gender images in the nation and nation's history. Thus, I structure my reading and analysis of Zimbabwean women's writing in a way that takes into account the gendered historical perspective, using the transitional moments as a tool to understand what is going on in the texts and what has been going on in Zimbabwean society. That, is, to understand how gender has been reconstituted in each period and the extent to which social, political and cultural transformations have resulted in various shifts in gender relations, roles and images in Zimbabwe.

Doris Lessing has been positioned as a postcolonial woman writer (Chennells, "Postcolonialism" 8, Muchemwa, *Imagining*). The first epigraph is from Lessing's introduction to a 1999 reprint of *The Golden Notebook* (1962) which "made her into one of the major feminist icons of literary history" (De Mul, "Doris Lessing, Feminism" 33).[8] The novel "became a veritable bible for feminists all over the world" (Moi, "I am Not a Woman Writer" 261). But, later Lessing resisted the feminist label and claimed the book was not about sex differences, but rather a multifaceted novel that is not merely "a useful weapon in the sex war" (ibid xv). She went on to claim that "the essence of the book ….says implicitly and explicitly that we must not divide things off, must not compartmentalise" (ibid xv). Lessing's remarks show that she is against the rubbishing of all men and what children are being taught in classrooms, but it also shows her concern with the centrality of childcare to women's freedom. The issues she raised became the focus of feminist theory in the 1970s, debating "the exclusions and simplifications involved in unitary categories such as 'woman' and 'feminism' and in undifferentiated statements on the basis of their illusionary monolithic nature" (De Mul 34). While, Lessing refuses the feminist label, her work continues to position her as a champion of women's rights, as reflected in the Swedish Academy press release for Lessing's 2007 Nobel Prize in Literature award, which called her "that epicist of the female experience, who with scepticism, fire and visionary power has subjected a divided civilisation to scrutiny" (2007).

The issues Lessing raised have become the focus of contemporary feminists working on intersectional theory who take into consideration how gender is constituted by other factors like race, ethnicity, class and sexuality (Yuval Davies, "Intersectionality" 2006, Anthias Floya and Davies "Contextualising Feminism" 1992, Kimberle "Mapping the Margins" 2000), and historical forces in the nation like politics and governments (Scott, "Gender" 1986). The notion of intersectionality was introduced by black feminist Kimberley Crenshaw ("Mapping the

[8] Elaine Showalter, one of the founders of feminist literary criticism, paid significant attention to Lessing's work. *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, (1978).

Margins"), and developed by black feminist scholars to conceptualise the interrelationships of gender, race, class, and age and other social relations as intertwined will enable me to analyse and explain the complex interconnection of everyday meanings and realities. Thus, a combination of postcolonial feminist, gender and intersectional theories will shed light on how colonial and neocolonial practices are being played out in contemporary social life represented in the texts. This method is suited to accommodating the complexities and ambivalences that the fictional characters in these novels encounter as they enact their quest for freedom.

1.2.2 Gendered nationalism and re-imaging the nation

The study views the nation as an imagined community (Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*) who share a national consciousness and national identity (Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*). The women writers unveil the gendered, patriarchal, racialized and (hetero) sexualized character of Zimbabwean nationalism, potraying how the nation is imagined in gendered forms (Boehmer, *Stories of Women*, Samuelson, *Remembering the Nation, Dismembering Women?*). Boehmer's study on gender, nation and postcolonial narrative argues that "the nation (is) informed throughout by its gendered history, by the normative masculinities and femininities that have shaped its growth over time" (*Stories of Women* 3). She focuses on South Africa's transitional moment and explores the making of nationhood through imaginative reconstructions of post-apartheid South Africa as a 'rainbow nation' produced from images of women. Though it focuses only on women, its analysis of the gendering of nation in a comparable context provides some helpful starting points for my study (*Remembering the Nation*). Zimbabwe women writers like Vera write back to nationalist appropriations of Nehanda in the Zimbabwean male literary tradition and by nationalist politicians as a muse for liberation wars and nation building (*Nehanda*). What Ranger describes as "patriotic history" ("History has it's Ceiling" 220) is shown by the Zimbabwean women writers to also be a "patriarchal history" in *The Stone Virgins*, *Nervous Conditions*, *The Book of Not*, while in *Don't Let's Go To the Dog's Tonight* white settler descendants claim their identity as Zimbabweans, and *The Uncertainty of Hope*, *An Elegy for Easterly* and *We Need New Names* represent the historical present. Using the periodization approach, this study will analyse the gendered history, gendered images and metaphoric and symbolic use of woman for nation building projects that have shaped postcolonial Zimbabwe.

There is a larger scholarship on gendered identities in women's writing in Africa that I will draw on for this specific study. Samuelson analyses the gendering of South Africa nation through images of women. Nfah-Abbenyi's and Boehmer's analyses of African literature and the politics of gender, especially their analysis of some of Vera's and Dangarembga's texts, will also provide

launching pads for this study. Boehmer's *Stories of Women: Gender and narrative in the postcolonial nation* will provide a useful framework in its analysis of how women's roles and responsibilities have shaped their private and public lives, and of how African women writers inscribe, reclaim and shape the nation. Nfah-Abbenyi's *Gender in African women's writing: Identity, sexuality, and difference* studies the ways in which issues of identity and difference influence the construction of subjectivity in women's quest for agency and self-determination. Focusing on Zimbabwean women writers and their negotiations of gender identities in and of the nation, my thesis draws on, adapt and extend the insights of these previous studies in relation to this specific body of writing.

1.2.3 Zimbabwean literary tradition and Zimbabwean Women's writing

Taking up its enquiry, the thesis aims to build upon available scholarship on Zimbabwean literature, which engages with gendered representations and women's writing in Zimbabwe. Veit-Wild's foundational text, *Preachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature*, offers historical and biographical approaches, but refers to only one woman writer, Dangarembga. Veit-Wild also controversially considers only black Zimbabwean writing, arguing that black and white Zimbabwean literary discourses are entirely distinct and divorced from one another. In contrast, I explore writing by white women who have made Zimbabwe their home or who have emerged out of Zimbabwe as writers (e.g. Lessing and Fuller). The different methodological approach which does not trace a developmental trajectory or perform sociology of literature, results in a different set of insights about Zimbabwean literature. My periodical approach enables me to trace and engage with previously unexplored intersections between, for instance, Lessing's representation of colonial domesticity and gender regimes in the white suburbs of the 1940s and Vera's representation of township domesticities and gender regimes of the same era, though written half a century later.

Zhuwarara's *Introduction to Zimbabwean Literature* offers a critical survey of creative works emerging from Zimbabwe since the early 1970s, and includes two useful chapters on Vera and Dangarembga in which he assesses the nature and scope of their contribution to Zimbabwean literature, and reveals the way they explore experiences of African people during the colonial era from a gender perspective.

Primorac's *The Place of Tears: Literature and Politics in Modern Zimbabwe* is useful in the way it analyses narrative displacement in relation to identity construction and fictional formation in selected Zimbabwean novels, which include those by three women writers (Maraire, Dangarembga, and Vera). Her study is helpful for its discussion of the role of fiction in advancing

social change. Though it does not focus on masculinity and femininity, it does helpfully consider how female characters in some novels are disadvantaged due to an absence of spatio–temporal rights.

The nation has been a site of analysis in Zimbabwe. The collection of essays in *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture*, edited by Muponde and Primorac counters "patriotic history" (Ranger, "Rule by Historiography" 2005) and challenges discourses of nationalism by envisioning a broadly inclusive alternative patriotic Zimbabwe history. This critical book paves the way for my thesis, in that some chapters are on white and black Zimbabwean authors, putting an end to a Zimbabwean literary tradition demarcated by race (xviii). Muchemwa's historical analysis of the representation of the city in Zimbabwean literature (*Imagining the City in Zimbabwean Literature 1949 to 2009*) opens the way for my gendered historical analysis of Zimbabwean women's literature. Also, Muponde's *Some Kinds of Childhood: Images of History and Resistance in Zimbabwean literature* explores the way the imagining of child and childhood by Zimbabwean writers is tied to the history of the nation. Viewing the nation as an institution and a discursive space, he states that through the construction of childhood images a nation can "predict how and on what terms it can survive" (10).

Two book-length studies focusing on images of women in Zimbabwean literature are Gaidzanwa's *Images of Women in Zimbabwean Literature*, which examines gender biases in fictional works written in Shona, Ndebele and English, and Berndt's *Female Identity in Contemporary Zimbabwean Fiction*. Both provide useful starting-points for thinking about representations of women in Zimbabwean literature. Gaidzanwa's study concludes in the early 1980s. Bendt's study is also useful, but focuses only on representations of female identity, rather than placing constructions of femininity in dialogue with those of masculinity, and examining how the nation is constructed out of the gendered images with which writers are engaging. Kizito Muchemwa and Robert Muponde's *Manning the Nation: Father Figures in Zimbabwean Literature and Society* is valuable in its study of masculinity and fatherhood in the context of Zimbabwe, even though it does not focus specifically on women authors (except for Grace Musila's essay "A Man Can Try" which analyses the negotiations of manhood in colonial urban spaces in Vera's writing. It is useful in particular for its analysis of the current crisis of masculinity in Zimbabwean culture and politics, which has manifested itself through the use of violence to suppress alternative masculinities and femininities in the name of nation-building.

While some book length studies or collections of essays have been based on individual writers such as Lessing (see Thorpe), Vera (see Muponde and Taruvinga, Cousins and Dodgson-Katiyo), Dangarembga (see Willey and Triber), and and a range of useful articles or chapters, usually on

individual writers and texts, have been published (see, for instance, Musila, Samuelson, Chennels, Muponde. Primorac, Nuttall) these forego the comparative approach that informs my research, which enables me to produce broader conclusions about women's literary contributions, and their engagements with gendered images.

1.3 Motifs and tropes

1.3.1 The quest motif

The quest motif that interweaves the texts under study originally comes from Lessing's *Martha Quest*, and my inclusion of her in the study helps to bring this out as a key thread in the Zimbabwean women writers' literary tradition. Lessing adapts the settler quest genre that has been a masculine prerogative to represent women's quest for freedom and individuality. The plots of the white settler adventure genre are shaped by quests in which the hero searches for objects of value, treasure and large sums of money, and "often involve finding and punishing perpetrators of crime" (Primorac, "The Novel" 56). I trace and analyse the quest woman image through Gayle Greene's formula for feminist quest genre. In "Feminist Fiction, Feminist Form," Greene maps the recurring pattern of the quest genre. The questing woman seeks "freedom" from traditional roles, looks to her past for answers about the present, looks to the cultural and literary tradition that formed her, contemplates the "role models" it provides her, finds "an ending of her own" and problematizes the mother (ibid. 82). The qualities of the archetypal quester are: independent, strong-willed, unsettled, intelligent, questioning, searching for freedom and a self-defined identity. She consciously seeks to realise her vision and undergoes various setbacks, but pursues her goal and emerges victorious. This thesis traces the questing woman (as a writer and the character she creates) who has no fear of words, has the courage to voice and articulate her desires, and the energy to demolish patriarchal houses confining women, while participating in building the house that is a refuge and a nurturing place for women, men and children.

The questing figure embarks on the journey and encounters obstacles from patriarchal men and women, who act in complicity with patriarchy, but transcends the obstacles, and encounters men who collaborate with her and help her realise her dreams. The questing protagonists encounter obstacles like mighty colonial weapons, marriage, sexuality, maternity, homelessness, hunger, poverty, rape, emotional and physical violence from men, and from women and the state, but they negotiate their way and transcend these barriers. In some cases transformed men act in solidarity and collaborate with them and they realise their dreams. Women also support one another to achieve set goals. The quest path is fraught with contradictions and complexities, but the quest

heroine soldiers on to attain self-fulfilment. I posit that the obstacles on the quest journey materialise interdependence of men and women.

This thesis traces the questing woman who has the courage to voice and articulate her desires, and the energy to demolish patriarchal houses confining her. Maybe Martha's radical refusal, "I won't give in. I won't" (*Matha Quest*), and Phephelaphi's declaration, "I will not. Will not" (*Butterfly Burning* 145), can make the image of a questing woman comprehensible and visible. Probably Tambudzai's most unrestrained subversive feminist taboo, mouthing, "I was not sorry when my brother died" (*Nervous Conditions* 1), crystallizes women's refusal to submit, which this thesis aims to unveil and map out. I draw attention to this radical articulation of a refusal to conform, a refusal to be contained by the different walls constructed by patriarchal notions of race, class, gender, sexuality and patriarchal motherhood. Throughout, the thesis draws attention to the complexities and ambivalences of the momentary triumphs and victories of the heroine and the nation.

13.2 The dirty trope

The trope of dirt has a long genealogical history in Zimbabwean political and literary discourse. The colonial Rhodesian government instituted racial statutes based on fear of contamination and the construction of the colonial "other" as dirty and filthy, particularly black women who were seen as immoral and promiscuous (Burke, "Sunlight soap has changed my life": Hygiene, commodification, and the body in colonial Zimbabwe" 212). The Rhodesian discourse of dirt, "othered" Africans to justify discriminating against them and "civilizing" them. The cleaning motif was appropriated by Josiah Tongogara, who coined the term "*Gukurahundi*" during the liberation war to mobilise newly-graduated freedom fighters from Tanzania to swiftly and violently repress the Nhari and Badza rebellion by "cleaning out" the rebels (White, *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo*; Alexander et al. *Violence and Memory*; David and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*). In the "do or die" elections of 1980, the ZANU-PF campaign slogan was "*Gore reGukurahundi*" – literally, "The Year of the People's Storm" (Alexander et al. 191), but used in the sense of "cleaning out" the Rhodesians by winning a majority of votes. In post-independent Zimbabwe, the ZANU-PF regime, led by Robert Mugabe, instigated the Matabeleland and Midlands *Gukurahundi* (in the same spirit as Tongogara), but it is worth noting that the early 1980s Matebeleland and Midlands *Gukurahundi* transformed itself into a storm that destroyed everything. The Matebeleland and Midlands *Gukurahundi* was operated by the North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade, targeting Joshua Nkomo's party and its supporters, ex–ZIPRA guerrillas turned dissidents, and the entire Ndebele people, perceived as dirt and filth which was preventing the formation of a clean one-party state – and this only stopped when Joshua Nkomo

signed the National Unity Accord in 1987 (Lene Bull, *Tales of the Nation* 208; Alexander et al. 180-1, 189- 203; Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in The Report "Breaking the Silence" 1987). This discourse of filth is associated with *Gukurahundi* operations in Vera's *The Stone Virgins*.

1.3. 3 The house trope

This section focuses on patriarchal nationalism and the trope of the nation as a house. In the Zimbabwe literary tradition the house has been central in theorising struggles for freedom and as a metaphor of the nation. Nationalists have used the rural land as the surface to architect the heroes – the sons of the soil – while less iconic spaces like the domestic space and marginalised women's groups are excluded (Muchemwa, I*magining*). Marechera has been credited with the production of the house metaphor in his novella *The House of Hunger*. His metaphor has subsequently been actualised in the Zimbabwean context, as the bread basket of Africa has now been officially confirmed as a house of hunger. Muchemwa reads the city as an (un)homely home and nation from a historical perspective, thus opening the way for my historical and gendered analysis of the house (Imagining 2009). Zimbabwean women writers take up the house image, but also give more attention to the house as a domestic space. This thesis proposes that Zimbabwe women writers use the house trope to engage with issues of home, origin and nation, in order to suggest that the house is multi-layered, capable of being demolished, redesigned and reconstructed to build an inclusive house and nation. I argue that in women's work the domestic house trope is not merely for gender (re)construction and roles, but also for (re)negotiating identity, belonging and the nation.

The home is a place of safety, nurturing and refuge but, it can also be invaded by public violence. The violence evokes resistances and dependencies that must be acknowledged and managed by both women and men. But, for others, the house trope, with its metaphors of containment and confinement, evokes feelings of bodily imprisonment, entrapment and suffocation, triggering women's desire for freedom and escape. I adopt Muchemwa's definition of a trope as a conceptual metaphor that allows the writers to imagine and "explore how fictional characters in their everyday experiences feel and think about their location" and "imagine their escape from the here and now" (*Imagining* 12). The literary women and their creators challenge and rebel against the patriarchal house with its rigid boundaries of private and public, femininity and masculinity.

The image of the destruction of the house, through fire and nature on the veld, occupies Lessing's mind from a very young age, and reappears in her creative work. Remembering her childhood in *Under My Skin*, Lessing says, "I had to set fire to something. I had to": she sets fire to a little

shelter for dogs, built attached to the veranda, and nearly burns the house down (108). "The thought of the burning house captures Lessing's imagination and reappears in her dreams because it is the natural extension of her feelings" (Rosner, "Home Fires" 80). Her feelings are to destroy the family home, thus destroying the family. I use the house trope to analyse the architecture of the patriarchal domestic house, its failings, and its destruction by the rebellious questing women in search of freedom, while also drawing attention to homely homes that nurture human relations in the texts. I am more interested in the concept of building that has been masculinised by nationalists, as I analyse how the women appropriate it, to demolish the patriarchal domestic house brick by brick until the wall comes down and the roof collapses in search of freedom.

In *The Grass is Singing*, Lessing reconstructs the image of the house in flames that she fantasized as a young girl (Rosner 79-80). The image of the "tin-roofed oven like box house", self-built by her husband foreshadows the protagonist's rebellion. The image of the destruction of the house as it "crumbled and fell….all gone" (195-6) probably signifies total rebellion by the questing woman, demolishing the domestic house and domesticity ideology, and the collapse of the racist Rhodesian nation. The destruction of the domestic house and its metaphors of the fracturing and disintegration of the family, frames the themes of *Martha Quest* and *A Proper Marriage*. In *Martha Quest*, Lessing recreates the building she lived and grew up in. The oval design and many rooms of the quest hybrid house are similar to Lessing's family home. Mrs Quest designs, Mr Quest draws the floor plan and the natives build it with indigenous materials. Lessing's literary re-construction of the house probably signifies the missed opportunity for a hybrid culture, home and nation (*Martha Quest*). In *A Proper Marriage* the probability of building a hybrid nation has been destroyed by the narrow-minded, uncreative society and the desire to remain British and middle class. The middle class ideology is materialised in the city's sterile suburban house. It is sterile because it is populated with servants, well-furnished with modern gadgets and her only responsibility is to supervise the workers, thus not nurturing the protagonist's creativity, so she finds suburban domestic life boring and rebels.

In *Nervous Conditions* the hut is a symbol of dirt and poverty that pushes the protagonist to pursue education as an escape route during the postcolonial period. The sterile mission house is a war zone, as one of the protagonist strikes back at her father Babamukuru (*Nervous Conditions*). The burning house trope re-emerges in Vera's *Butterfly Burning* as Phephelaphi burns the township house and her pregnant body to escape from motherhood and domesticity, clearing the ground for Vera to reconstruct Cephas's Bulawayo flat that at last offers Nonceba a refuge and a healing space in *The Stone Virgins*. In *Nehanda*, Vera revisits the pre-colonial period where the hut and yard are connected. The mother gives birth to Nehanda in a "choke-filled hut" (5), built with "sturdy musasa poles dug deep into the ground by the men, then plastered liberally with mud

by the women". The man cuts the poles and the women cut the grass (15-6). The child is born and nurtured in an indigenous hut and becomes a leader of the second *chimurenga*. Vera reconstructs the indigenous house to depict fluid gender roles and complementarity at work, to challenge and expose postcolonial nationalist domestic ideology as a colo nial legacy. The indigenous hut is life-giving and nurturing during the pre-colonial period (*Nehanda*).

Chapter 2: Representing Nehanda: Writing back to colonialism's "frozen image" and the male nationalist tradition

2.1 Introduction

In her first novel *Nehanda* (1993) and in her last completed and published text *The Stone Virgins* (2002), Yvonne Vera "writes back" simultaneously to both the colonial representation of Nehanda as a "frozen image" (Hunter 1998, 77) and nationalist appropriations of Nehanda in the Zimbabwean male literary tradition. While critics have argued that Vera is herself invested in nationalist discourse in *Nehanda* (Vambe 2002, 2004 and Bull–Christiansen 2004), I argue that, though explicitly committed to the nation, Vera is consistently critical of both colonialism and nationalism, and particularly of their gendered and exclusionary effects. There is nonetheless a discernable shift between the two novels: in *Nehanda*, she writes her eponymous hero both into and out of the nation; in *The Stone Virgins*, she is explicitly critical of the ways in which Nehanda's legacy has been placed in service to a nationalist discourse and practice that is revealed as murderous to women.

Nehanda centres on the mythical and legendary woman warrior and leader whose spirit possessed Charwe of the Mazoe Valley who, alongside the spirit medium Kaguvi, led the first *chimurenga* (rebellion or war of liberation against colonialism) of 1896–7 against the British colonial settlers. Nehanda is concerned with recreating the figure of Charwe/Nehanda herself, representing her birth and childhood and then following her possession by the Mhondoro (the greatest Shona ancestral spirit, the rain-maker), and her leadership of the anti–colonial rebellion. Significantly, Vera rewrites her history and life by representing her as a dual character (Charwe/Nehanda) who is influential in shaping the nature and course of the rebellion. Through the duality of Charwe/Nehanda, Vera deconstructs the colonialist and nationalist binary of either woman or hero by having both in one body. Vera also rescues Nehanda from either excessive feminization or masculization by representing what she describes as "the actuality of her life" (Hunter 1998, 77). In the process, she interrogates both colonialist and nationalist representations of gender and begins to map out new post–colonial gender positions.

In the Zimbabwean political, historical and aesthetic imagination, Nehanda has been cast as a national muse, and is invoked as the source of inspiration and legitimation for various nationalist projects. She has been appropriated by nationalists to script a story of resistance and defeat in the first *chimurenga*; revolt and victory in the second *chimurenga* (war of liberation in 1964–1979 leading to independence in 1980) and the violent acquisition of land from 2000, leading to the

Zimbabwean political and economic crisis that has been deemed the "third revolution" or "third *chimurenga*" by ZANU-PF.

According to oral traditions and historical sources (Lan, *Guns* 1985, Ranger, *Revolt* 1967), the original Nehanda was the daughter of Matope, the first Munhumutapa (the first ruler or lord of the conquered land) who founded the Mutapa dynasty in the fifteenth century. Nehanda and her brother committed the ritual incest ordered by their father to legitimize the dynasty and render it sacred. The ritual incest was believed to have consolidated Matope's rule, and he rewarded Nehanda by bequeathing to her a portion of his empire. After her death, Nehanda became a Mhondoro who possessed various mediums until, 500 years later, her spirit came to occupy the body of Charwe Nyakasikana, the daughter of Mhutsa descendent from the Rwizi clan in Chitungwiza.

According to Ranger's *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896–7*, both Charwe, the female spirit medium of Nehanda, and the male spirit medium of Kaguvi, Gumboreshumba (another ancestral spirit), led the first *chimurenga*, rebelling against colonial incursion in the late nineteenth-century, and both were executed by the British when the rebellion was suppressed on 27 April 1898. During the spectacle of her execution, Nehanda prophesied that her bones would rise again to fight colonialism. This prophecy became the source of inspiration for the second liberation struggle, which led to the independence of Zimbabwe on 27 April 1980. During this liberation war, Nehanda possessed a woman called Kanzaruwa, who participated in the liberation struggle, although she was mostly used as a symbol for mobilization by the ZANU-PF liberation movement (Raftopoulos 1999, 122). Josiah Tungamirai, a commander of one of the liberation armies, relates: "When we started the war the spirit mediums helped with recruitment…. Mbuya Nehanda was the most important recruit in those days. Once the children, the youth and girls in the area, knew that Nehanda had joined, they came in large numbers" (quoted in Lan 1985, 147–8).

Revisiting these pasts in her two novels, Vera articulates the violence inflicted on Nehanda/Charwe by the colonial settlers and problematises her appropriation into the male nationalist tradition. Exploring how Vera writes in and out of the nation in *Nehanda*, I will propose that she rescues her character from both excessive feminization and masculinization in order to construct the hyphenated figure of a woman–hero. Aware of the complementary nature of social gender roles, Vera constructs Kaguvi, Nehanda's male counterpart, as a weeping hunter. Of particular interest is the way in which Vera appropriates Nehanda from both colonial and male nationalist representations as she positions herself as a woman writer in the national narrative that has been a male preserve and reinvents its function. In *The Stone Virgins*, much of which is set soon after independence in 1980, Vera critiques the appropriation of Nehanda by the ZANU-PF

government and ex–ZIPRA dissidents during the Matabeleland massacres. Here Vera explores the effects on the character Sibaso of the Nehanda-figure that circulates within the male literary tradition, as exemplified by Mutsvairo's *Feso* (1956), and the damaging forms of nationalism produced around this figure, not least its sacrificial and murderous dimensions.

2.2 Male representations and the authority of authorship

In *Nehanda*, Vera responds to and reanimates the colonialist "frozen image", as she states that "I wanted to write beyond the photograph, you know, that frozen image, beyond the date, beyond the fact of her dying. If anything in my book she doesn't die, she departs" (Hunter "Shaping", 77). The theme of colonial violence is central throughout *Nehanda* as she is subjected to both physical and discursive violence. Through prophetic casting, Vera enlivens the "frozen image", using it as the framing image of the novel through the flashbacks of the body in pain, and subject to colonial violence and conquest:

> Pain sears the lines on her palms, and turns her eyes to her hands in wonder. Rivers and trees cover her palms; the trees are lifeless and the rivers dry. She feels that gaping wound, everywhere. It is red like embers, but soft like water. The wound has been shifting all over her body, and she can no longer find it. (Vera 1993, 1)

Vera captures the life and vision of Nehanda and uses the image of the wind, symbolic of the spirit ancestors who are present throughout the text from her birth to her death. In her characterization of Nehanda, the mythical consciousness allows her to negate her hanging, as Nehanda transcends space and time through spiritual possession. Through Nehanda's visions of the future, Vera enlivens the "frozen image" whilst foreshadowing her death as a necessary and heroic act. Whilst recorded colonial history has it that she was captured, tried and hanged, Vera challenges this version, as Nehanda's spirit now escapes before that execution and declares a triumph over colonialism through the prophecy "My people will not rest in bondage" (97). The British ignored this prophecy at their own peril, as it inspired the second liberation struggle.

If colonial discourse and practice consigned Nehanda to a "frozen image", in the male literary and nationalist tradition, she is very much alive, and often cast as muse – a source of inspiration for creativity who lends legitimacy to nationalist projects. In the male nationalist tradition, Nehanda and Kaguvi shaped the ideology and direction of the second *chimurenga*. Nehanda in particular is used in the project of "imagining the nation" (Anderson's sense): around her figure, nationalist writers "construct identities by producing meanings about "the nation" with which we can identify; these are contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect its present with its past, and images which are constructed of it" (Hall 1992, 293). Mutsvairo's *Feso*

(1956), Stanlake Samkange's *Year of the Uprising* (1978), and Charles Samupindi's *Death Throes*: *The Trial of Mbuya Nehanda* (1990) all appropriate Nehanda in their constructions of the Zimbabwean nation as an "imagined community" (Anderson, *Imagined* 6, 24 –7, 145; Bhabha, *The Location* 2–3). These texts use the linear time of political cause and effect to script a story of revolt, resistance, defeat and victory. In this scripting, Nehanda and Kaguvi become defining figures of citizenship and belonging.

Mutsvairo's *Feso* played a critical role in the creation and reproduction of nationalist ideology by "responding to colonial myths with counter-Shona myths of origin as a way of trying to prove the superiority of the past culture of Africans" (Vambe 2004, 27). In *Feso*, Mutsvairo allegorises the life of the Shona people, rediscovers collective memories and infuses oral traditions into the written one in order to portray a "national golden age" in pre–colonial Zimbabwe, whose reconstitution becomes the basis of Zimbabwean nationalist aspirations and gives birth to the culture of omission (excluding others from the nation). Born in Mazowe district in Zimbabwe, Mutsvairo was familiar with Shona stories about the legendary Nehanda's military prowess and leadership during the first *chimurenga*. In his Mazoe valley epic, *Feso*, he initiates the cult of Nehanda, engaging orality to construct a history of nationalist resistance. Presented and constructed as a figure of violence, her spirit associated with her militaristic nationalism and xenophobic patriotism, Mutswairo's Nehanda is one whose warrior spirit is appealed to in order to resuscitate the warrior spirit of Zimbabwean masculinity that is seen as having been feminized by colonization. She is presented as a construction of national aspiration, her representation working to restore the power of traditional authority, whilst issuing the claim that Africans are fighting for their land, against oppression and suffering. The "Ode to Nehanda" from *Feso* was recited at *pungwe* (night vigils or political meetings at night) during the second *chimurenga*, and deceased, former vice-president of Zimbabwe, Simon Muzenda was famous for reciting the poem. While advancing the nationalism of the liberation war, *Feso* has also been identified as the "literary originator of an unproblematised ethnic nationalism" (Muchemwa 2005, 195). Mutsvairo appropriates the Zimbabwean oral tradition and history in order to advance the interest of the Zezuru ethnic group. He shapes the myth of Nehanda to give birth to the politics of inclusion and exclusion in the nation as his Nehanda becomes a central figure in defining citizenship and belonging. In *Feso*, Mutsvairo consciously creates a myth of the nation that validates the nationalist struggle; his Nehanda becomes a symbol of origins with which ZANU-PF claims authority over the nation and then delimits membership in an exclusionary manner. In the nationalist project initiated by Mutswairo, Charwe loses her individual (gendered) identity.

Samupindi wrote *Death Throes* based on his experiences as a freedom fighter, a claim emphasized by the statement in the book that "the author developed his material from ascertained

fact" (1). Here Nehanda loses further presence and is reduced to an ideological instrument used to fight external enemies who have come to disturb the sovereignty of the nation, while Kaguvi is given prominence as the leader of the rebellion. In Stanlake Samkange's *Year of the Uprising* (1978) prominence is given to Kaguvi, his capture, conversion to Christianity and death, while in contrast, nothing is said of the capture and resistance to conversion of Charwe/Nehanda, or of the spectacle of her execution, besides the mention that both their bodies were buried in a secret place. Samupindi and Samkange were probably influenced by Ranger's *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896–97* which problematically privileges male figures like Kaguvi and Mkwati as the ones who shaped the nature and course of the first *chimurenga*.

In response to representations such as these, Vera interrogates both nationalist narrative and colonial historiography. In contrast to male writers, moreover, she takes up the Nehanda figure not as muse but as medium. Positioning herself as another woman in a chain of mediums who have been possessed by Nehanda since the fifteenth century, she establishes what Washington, in a different context, refers to as the "authority of authorship" (1984, 149) and legitimises her writing in a context where there was a relative dearth of female writers writing in English in Zimbabwe, except for Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, which was published outside Zimbabwe. Veit-Wild, shows that there was no viable female tradition soon after independence (*Teachers* 1987). This lack of models to look up to results in an "anxiety of authorship" (Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman* 1979), which Vera overcomes by turning to Charwe/Nehanda. Vera relates that in writing Nehanda she "needed to enter [Nehanda's] mythic consciousness to really be part of it, to share it and to claim it as [her] own history and [her] own identity" (Hunter 1998, 78). As she elaborates later:

> Nehanda is really at the centre of our spiritual belief as a whole nation, and to write about her was very daring. It transformed me […] I felt in the end it came out of a state of possession. I had asked her in my traditional manner of asking – get up before dawn to ask for her guidance – and she had visited […] I felt a fierce sense of responsibility to tell this story, and to do so, *I had to co–exist with this Nehanda spirit*. It really gave me a lot of strength as a woman (Bryce "Interview", 222; my emphasis).

In a significant shift, then, Vera claims the authority of authorship by positioning herself as a medium rather than presenting Nehanda as a muse. In invoking the spirit of Nehanda and entering into a state of possession through her writing, Vera gains "strength as a woman" and begins to position herself as the spokesperson of the gendered subaltern and a warrior in the war against gender inequality. Her oeuvre continues to articulate and reach towards the future that Nehanda envisions in her first novel: "the women who celebrate their shelter-giving selves, and see new existences come out of dreaming air. They too are in a state of birth, and growth, and unstoppable exultation….Their footsteps bear signs of a majestic language that will lead them safely into the

future" (Vera, *Nehanda* 113). With her literary output of five novels and a collection of short stories, Vera performs Nehanda's vision of a green valley in which women have developed a "majestic language" and is certainly remembered as a "writer who had no fear for words and who had an intense love of her nation" (Mutandwa, "Interview" 6).

2.3 The woman–hero and the weeping hunter

> This fascinated me completely, because the books on colonialism which I had read hardly mentioned women's voices, and then to look at my own country's history and know that absolutely the first person to lead any kind of resistance against the Europeans was a woman. That really was engaging, mesmerizing history. And then I needed to enter that mythic consciousness to really be part of it, to share it and to claim it as my own history and my own identity….I believe that is how it was, for Nehanda in her mind. Her communion with the spiritual world was such that it transformed her entire communion with everything else. (Hunter, "Shaping" 78)

Vera's Nehanda "structures meanings that may only be fully grasped from its inter–textual relations to [the texts discussed above] and from its mode of representation" (Wilson–Tagoe, "History" 161). Though not rejecting the nation evoked in Nehanda's prophecy that her "bones will rise again", Vera is at the same time critical of how Nehanda has been appropriated by male writers for nationalist ends. Her re–invention of Nehanda imagines the possibility of rupture in the social order in which she operates. The nation she is inscribing is presented as one brought into being by the hyphenated subject of a woman–hero. Presenting such a figure, she brings into question the binary oppositions of male/female and masculine/feminine, along with the public/private divide onto which they are mapped and which are shown to have been introduced by colonial forces and then adopted by the postcolonial nationalist government, which restricted women's presence in the public domain, thus limiting their citizenship.

Vera shows in Nehanda that Zimbabwe had its own gender ideology prior to the colonial incursion – one that was disrupted by imported Victorian gender constructions. Even though pre–colonial Zimbabwean society was organized around binary gender roles, some space for fluidity between them was in place. Spirit possession by a mhondoro afforded Charwe/Nehanda power and authority over the male and female elders in her community. Vera explains that in Nehanda's time anyone chosen by the ancestors could emerge as a leader (Hunter, "Shaping" 79). Colonization disrupted Shona culture, with the consequent loss of this space of power available to women, and the ZANU-PF nationalist liberation movement adopted this model during the liberation struggle, thus disempowering the Nehanda medium. The ways in which Vera's

Nehanda transcends the gendered hierarchy suggests that some women had more status in the past before the encroachment of colonialism and its Victorian constructions.[9] Age and motherhood also granted women power and authority in the patriarchal Shona society. For instance, in *Nehanda*, Vatete the midwife has a higher status, and "was also among the shapers of wisdom, who determined the future of the village" (*Nehanda* 9). It was possible for a woman with a powerful personality to exploit a certain fluidity, but colonial administrators rendered gender roles more rigid through formalising them in policy documents to the disadvantage of women.

The British settlers intruded on the pre-colonial space of fluid gender roles, aiming to "introduce order and culture" (55). The British settlers introduced a gendered binary of public versus private and constructed roles for women and men that failed to accommodate figures such as Nehanda. At first the colonial settlers in Vera's novel do not take her seriously because she is a woman. Mr Browning, the colonial administrator, does not see her as a threat as he "doubt[s] the natives can listen to an old woman like her. This society has no respect for women, whom they treat like children. A woman has nothing to say in the life of the natives. Nothing at all" (75). Unable to believe that Nehanda can inspire people to rebel and have the ability to coordinate such a coherent resistance near the capital, Salisbury, the Victorian patriarchal colonialists label her a wizard (77) because Shona men do in fact listen to her. They cannot believe a woman could have such power over men. Consequently, they see her as an exceptional woman when later forced to recognize her as a powerful force, thereby keeping intact their rigid binary of woman versus hero. Whilst communicating the arrogance and lack of knowledge of Mr Browning, Vera satirizes his misreading of the native culture.

Redefining and renegotiating power dynamics in post–colonial Zimbabwe, Vera appropriates African myths and rituals to reconstruct African womanhood and manhood. Recuperating a pre–colonial space of fluidity between binarised genders with which to respond to the rigid and exclusive binaries of both colonial and nationalist gender representation, Vera theorizes in the Zimbabwean context what Sofola, writing of West Africa, has termed "the dual sex system of socio–political power sharing" (quoted in Sofola, "Feminism" 53–4). Zulu Sofola draws on Kameno Okonjo, who argues that power sharing or co–rulership was practiced in pre–colonial Africa: "The African woman has not been inactive, irrelevant and silent. Rather, African tradition has seen the wisdom of a healthy social organization where all its citizens are seen to be vital channels for the establishment of a dual–sex power structure which is lacking in European and Arab cultures" (quoted in Sofola, "Feminism" 54). My reading of Vera's Nehanda is similarly advancing an understanding of a dual–sex system of socio–political organization in traditional

[9] See the discussion of Lessing's representation of Victorian gender regimes and the ways in which they were grafted onto African/Zimbabwean contexts in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Africa, rooted in "a philosophy of holistic harmony and communalism rather than the individualistic isolationism characteristic of European thought" (Sofola, "Feminism" 54). The Shona proverb *Chara chimwe hachitswanyi inda* (one finger cannot squash a louse) emphasises co–ruler-ship, while another – *Zano ndega akasiya jira mumasese* (making decisions without consulting has negative results) – emphasizes the discursive space in the Shona culture. I will analyse Vera's reconstruction of Nehanda and Kaguvi in that context. The argument, in short, is that Vera inscribes illustrates that pre–colonial Zimbabwe was not masculinised, and that in recreating this past she inscribes against the postcolonial perspective of a nation in which women are used as symbolic figures and other groups are excluded co–rulership of the nation.

Vera challenges spectacles of power in the masculinised family drama displayed by the construction of Sekuru Kaguvi and Mbuya Nehanda during the second chimurenga by nationalists in their songs that were sung during *pungwe* to conscientise the people into continuing the struggle started by this family of ancestors (see also Samupindi's *Death Throes*). Following independence, nationalists maintained the colonial gender binary, with its production of women as mothers, as symbolized by the recuperation of Nehanda as Mbuya. Rudo Gaidzanwa argues that:

> symbolically, re–domestication of women was effected by the renaming of the largest maternity hospital after Nehanda Nyakasikana.…[D]espite the fact that ZANLA had invoked Nehanda as a fighter during the war, the ruling party was also prompt in its conversion of Nehanda from a political to a maternal figure ("Bourgeois" 117).

In the renaming ceremonies, Sekuru Kaguvi Street, symbolic of male mobility and authority, was born. This re–gendering of space was cemented by the 1983 Operation Clean–up, in which women found alone in the streets of Harare at night were imprisoned as suspected prostitutes. Nehanda's power and authority as a spirit medium and warrior are thus re-inflected by the postcolonial state, into that of the Mother of the Nation, while the role of the male as warrior and protector of women and children is re–inscribed as the patriarchal masculinist hegemonic nation. Even though in much African feminist thought motherhood per se has been political, Vera's critique here is against masculinist-nationalist appropriations of maternity as a site of taming and domesticating women, and the simultaneous inscription of masculine authority as leaders.

Vera's text engages with the past in radically different ways to the nationalist narrative, envisioning new gendered possibilities in the nation. Writing back to both colonialists and nationalists in her presentation of Nehanda, Vera aims to bring Nehanda to the fore as a woman who "led the first rebellion, not just physically but spiritually, which basically was the basis of our entire struggle that followed – the Second *Chimurenga*" (Bryce 222). She thus rewrites the history of the first *chimurenga* to challenge nationalist discourses in which Nehanda is either a woman (physical presence) or a hero (spiritual presence), but never both. In the binary Vera aims to

deconstruct, Charwe is silenced and loses her identity as a woman who physically commanded the first *chimurenga* through the voice of Nehanda, becoming instead an image as the spiritual warrior takes over her body. In this section I explore how Vera writes back to both in her presentation of Nehanda as a woman–hero and of Kaguvi as a weeping hunter. Critical to this project is the ways in which she evokes the duality of Charwe/Nehanda, rather than seeing Charwe as the woman fully absorbed into Nehanda the spirit.

To this end, much narrative attention is paid to the "actuality of [Charwe/Nehanda's] life". The novel opens and closes with a scene of Nehanda's death. Between these two bookmarks, the story of her birth, daily routine, youth, possession, capture and execution unfolds. Vera's Nehanda is marked by difference from the moment of birth, as she does not immediately cry after birth, then later cries the whole night (*Nehanda* 13). In this depiction, Vera subtly foregrounds the importance of Charwe (the medium) herself, showing that her life is destined for great things from birth, and thus before her possession by the Nehanda spirit. In this way, Vera inscribes Charwe's gendered body, which has been erased by nationalist celebration of the spirit of Nehanda. As the plot unfolds, Vera's Nehanda is revealed as "a dual character: she has an 'other worldly' and a human aspect, she is simultaneously, both spirit–medium/ woman" (Primorac, "The Place" 151). This duality resonates in her voice during a possession ritual: "It is an alluring voice, undulating, carrying the current of a roar that reminds them of who they have been in the past, but it is also the comforting voice of a woman, of their mother whom they trust" (Vera 1993, 62). Vera inscribes Charwe's feminine attributes, to which the people can relate, whilst the spiritual Nehanda grants her the power and authority of a commanding voice over the people. The text suggests that she is simultaneously woman and Mhondoro, or physical and spiritual being. In her voice the people hear both the "comforting" tones of "mother" and the "roar" of the Shirichena (Shirichena means white bird and was the totem of Nehanda, so Vera uses Shirichena when referring to the spirit of Nehanda or Mhondoro) (31, 58-60). The novel constructs Charwe and Nehanda as equally important historical figures, narrating the life of both the medium who led the rebellion (Charwe in her capacity as an ordinary woman possessed by the Mhondoro spirit), and Nehanda (the possessor or spirit hero) herself in one body. In the process, she deconstructs binaries pivotal to both colonialist and nationalist imaginings by producing the hyphenated woman–hero. Whilst in Shona culture spirit possession means one is in contact with ancestors during the trance, Vera constructs her identity as emerging from the tension of the two worlds she inhabits, the ancestors and the living, and uses images from nature to represent Nehanda's ability to collapse familiar categories of life and death. Vera uses an image of the whirling wind to show how, from birth, Nehanda is presented as a normal child and as the chosen protégée of a spirit that can move at once in opposite directions, with time and against time, collapsing all time within its perturbed interior (3). From conception Nehanda deconstructs dualities and during her death the

whirling wind allows her to cross the boundaries of time (112). The novel suggest the departure of the Shirichena/Nehanda spirit through her scream, and alludes to her defiance against failure or surrender through the proclamation that, "My people will not rest in bondage" (117).

One might argue that Vera is reproducing the nationalist script when she re–presents once more the figure of Nehanda issuing the prophecy that "my bones will rise again". Her representation of Nehanda's death does indeed tap into nationalist discourse which claims she did not die, but rather, that the two component parts of her being (the physical and the spiritual) were separated, with the bones of her physical being leading future struggles such as the second *chimurenga* that resulted in Independence. Alternatively, one could advance an interpretation of the novel and its politics which notes how it destabilizes the gender norms that produce the symbolic Mother of the Nation and the savior–son motif in nationalist discourse (Samuelson 2007, 166). While evoking the national narrative of sacrificial redemption, Nehanda envisions her own death as necessary for the freedom of her people, offering herself up in order to save her people from persecution by the colonial settlers after they had failed to capture her (*Nehanda* 113–4). Woman herself, and not the sacrificial son, becomes the "saviour figure." Both her participation in the rebellion and her sacrificial death erode the cultural constructions of national collectivities that depend on men going to war to protect women and children. It is for this reason that Nehanda inspired women's demand to fight on the war front during the second *chimurenga*.

As a liberation war hero rather than a mother, Nehanda is presented to the nation as revealing the benefits of releasing women from confined gender roles. Vera has Nehanda's mother challenge the women who want to inscribe Nehanda into the traditional gender roles of wife and mother, while through Nehanda's birth, demystifying the glorification of motherhood by providing "realistic knowledge" of the social and reproductive meanings of maternity. Readers are shown the pain Nehanda's mother endures when she gives birth, along with the difficulties of mothering. In the process, Vera challenges women to "throw off [the] shackles of conventional femininity, identified by male power" (Hunter, "Zimbabwe Nationalism" 231).

Vera's resort to the separation of the private/public realms is largely articulated through the hyphenated subject position of woman–hero that she presents through Charwe/Nehanda as she reconceptualises gender positions in colonial Zimbabwe and also issues an appeal to the post colony. Reminding people of the roles women have taken up as heroes, fighting tirelessly against the colonizers, she suggests that women should be afforded equal opportunities for leadership, not simply ceremonial leadership positions such as that occupied by Teurairopa Mujuru, the first female second vice-president of Zimbabwe.

Vera challenges the rigidity of male–female binaries, and consequently alludes to gender as socially constructed and historically shifting. During each transition (from pre–colony to colony, and from colony to post-colony) new definitions of womanhood/femininity and manhood/masculinity are constructed by and on the political and social terrain of relationships between men and women. According to Connell (1995, 68) the terms "masculinity" and "manhood" attain substance only in contrast to femininity or womanhood (quoted in Zenenga 127). Therefore, in order to reconceptualise femininity, it is necessary to reconceptualise masculinity, liberating both from the binaries that have constituted gender identity following the colonial fixing of the previously more fluid gender roles in the pre–colonial dual–sex system. In *Nehanda*, Vera attempts to create male and female as equal and complementary, destabilizing the hierarchical opposition between masculine and feminine by producing a "new man" through redefining Kaguvi as a weeping hunter.

Morrell argues that "masculinity can and does change, and that it is not therefore a fixed, essential identity" (*Changing Man* 4). Masculinities are, moreover, "socially and historically constructed in a process which involves contestation between rival understandings of what being a man should involve" (*Changing Man* 7, Zenenga, "Boys" 217). Connell posits that Zimbabwean history shows that "at any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted" (Connell, 1995, 68 quoted in Zenenga, "Boys" 127). Traditional pre–colonial Zimbabwean masculinity derived its identity from the ability to protect and provide for women, children and weaker members of society. The attributes of daring, aggression and courage, and of remaining calm and reliable in a crisis by holding emotions in check, were considered the preserve of man in this traditional patriarchal society. In short, "macho" qualities were exalted and feminine attributes denigrated/undervalued. At the same time, gender ideals were, as I have argued, complementary and fluid in that they allowed for the participation of women in the public domain. In her representation of Nehanda, Vera shows that violence is not the exclusive preserve of men. Nehanda demonstrates that a woman's body, like its male counterpart, is also capable of ruthlessness, violence and valour (60, 62, and 66). Through the configuration of Nehanda and Kaguvi, Vera foregrounds the Nation's symbolization of both masculine and feminine gender in the service of nationalism.

Vera's Kaguvi is presented as a healthy, strong and charismatic man. As a hunter, he is also the embodiment of ideal traditional African masculinity: the courageous, daring man with brute physical strength who performs the role of provider (57). Kaguvi performs his masculinity through killing a bull, drinking the fresh blood and eating the raw heart when he is dared to prove his warriorhood (71). At the same time, he is presented as humble and beseeching before the people who can grant him power over their future (71). Whilst sporting masculine attributes, then,

he is not arrogant. As the rebellion gathers momentum "the voice of Nehanda comes to Kaguvi. The voice gives him strength, and he works with it towards achieving the goals of the rebellion" (73; also 79–80, 88). By drawing attention to Kaguvi receiving instructions and carrying out orders as directed by Nehanda in order to lead the whole village to fight the colonial forces, Vera subverts the national narrative that has privileged Kaguvi's leadership in the rebellion. At the same time, she reconstructs and inscribes complementarity in the Zimbabwean postcolonial nation that has forgotten women's contributions to the liberation struggle, and which is instead enforcing colonial versions of domesticity.

On the other hand, traditional constructions of manhood are destabilized by the representation of Kaguvi as the weeping hunter, whom Vera produces as complementary to her woman–hero. Kaguvi surrenders and is imprisoned (100), and is presented as anxious and afraid (103). Nehanda has warned that the tradition of the stranger would destroy the people (79–81), and cautions people not to touch anything from him. Kaguvi, however, grows curious to see and know about the book the priest reads and initiates a religious discussion with him, convincing himself that "it is better to know what governs the stranger's world, and what secret fears he holds" (104). The narrator goes on to explain that Kaguvi did not expect to be charmed by what he would learn and this communication is presented as a blunder that leads to his final destruction.

Through the exchange between Mr Browning and Kaguvi, Vera illustrates the incompatibility of traditional religion and Christianity, and appears to demonstrate that Kaguvi is not a true Mhondoro, as Gumboreshumba's traditional faith shifts (104–7). Kaguvi is portrayed as life–loving, wanting to know more about the Christian religion's philosophy of resurrection and eternal happiness in the afterlife. While not asserting conversion in this scene, Vera portrays Kaguvi's separation from the ancestral spirits through his nightmares. Whilst traditional masculinity demands that a man should be courageous and calm, Kaguvi sweats with fear, his "ears sing with deafening, pulsating blood. After the ceaseless pounding in his head, and the burning in his stomach, Kaguvi understands.…[that n]o one can walk away from the departed, free and whole" (108). Colonial history confirms that Kaguvi was indeed converted (Ranger 1967). His spirit is broken by the colonial forces and he succumbs, unlike Nehanda who is defiant until her death and whose spirit leaves her body before execution. In contrast, Vera presents the hunter "Kaguvi weep[ing]" (108) and this display of emotion is considered a feminine trait. By making her valiant hunter weep, Vera begins a process of producing a "new man" that will culminate in her portrayal of Cephas in *The Stone Virgins*. Already in Nehanda we see her inscribing against a postcolonial nation in which violent masculinity has become the model, and presenting a new version of masculinity that has a human heart.

Vera emphasizes woman–hero and weeping hunter as complementary. When told by Mr Browning that Kaguvi has been hanged, "[Nehanda's] face cracked, like mud on a riverbed" (117), symbolic of disintegration. However, Vera creates leadership space for Nehanda by making Kaguvi die first. This allows her to confirm and consolidate Nehanda's hyphenated subject position as woman–hero. She is a hero because she envisions her death as necessary for the liberation of the people and Nehanda's spirit escapes before execution, whilst Charwe declares her body a site for resistance through her rising bones' prophecies. The colonialists took her prophecy seriously and buried her in a secret cave to make sure she would not rise again, but obviously they did not understand the dynamics of the Shona religion in which a dead person is more powerful than the living. Once killed, Nehanda becomes a legend, and iconic symbol of resistance. Exactly eighty-two (82) years after her execution on 27 April 1898, the Zimbabwean national flag was raised for the first time. Elizabeth Ncube's use of the Ndebele language to praise Nehanda, the Shona ancestral spirit, "acknowledge[s] that Nehanda is a national spirit, an ancestral spirit of Zimbabwe" (2003, 455–57). This reminds readers of the sacrifices that women have made, and the struggles that they have fought during the different wars, thus restoring political agency to women as warriors and leaders through the text.

While at the moment of identification and embrace Vera claims the right to authorship through Nehanda, her enthusiasm does not allow her to offer a strong and vigorous critique of nationalism; however, in *The Stone Virgins*, Vera displays a radical shift as she grapples with the legacy of Nehanda, which manifests in violent masculinity circulating in nationalist discourse, whilst paying greater attention to quasi–nationalism and the ethos of sacrifice altogether. Her use of Nehanda shifts from looking back, to an interrogation of the contemporary nationalist scenario of post-colonial Zimbabwean politics, as she particularly critiques a militarized masculinity that is murderous to femininity.

2.4 *The Stone Virgins*: Nehanda's legacy and the male nationalist's baggage

The Stone Virgins is set on the eve of Zimbabwe's independence. In this novel Vera does not turn to Nehanda herself, but explores the impact of her legacy as appropriated by the male nationalist tradition. Nehanda features through Vera's reference to *Feso*, Sibaso's "baggage", and in a quote about bones and guns rising anew. I argue that *The Stone Virgins* grapples with the political and literary legacy of Solomon Mutsvairo's foundational nationalism as portrayed through the character of Sibaso and the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) government's Fifth Brigade (the North Korean-trained brigade). I suggest that Sibaso's reading of *Feso* shapes him and the soldiers who burn Mahlathini and Thandabantu store in Kezi.

The title *The Stone Virgins* is drawn from Sibaso's meditations on the stony landscape of the Gulati hills that encircle Kezi village and shelter Sibaso in the sacred cave (decorated with ancient paintings of the stone virgins). Despite the war, Kezi is a functioning society, with Thandabantu store at the centre, providing a meeting place. Cephas, the traveller from eastern Zimbabwe, meets Thenjiwe there and they have a short passionate love affair until Thenjiwe sends him away because he is not from Kezi. The novel then revisits the period of transition from war to Zimbabwean Independence as people look forward to the future and the demobilized Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) female guerrillas present signs of gender transformation. But instead of celebrating this newfound freedom, the novel turns to expose the Matabeleland massacres (moments of madness according to Robert Mugabe, president of Zimbabwe at the time). The new leaders distrusted each other, and, in early 1982 ZANU-PF government's policy of *Gukurahundi* (a colloquial Shona expression meaning "the storm that destroys everything" or "clean out trash"), orchestrated by the Fifth Brigade and answerable to Mugabe only, targeted Joshua Nkomo's party and ex–ZIPRA guerrillas, like Vera's character Sibaso, who went back into the bush to hide (Alexander et al. 2000; Webner 1981; Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace 1997; Legal Resources Foundation 1997 for detailed accounts of the Matabeleland atrocities). In *The Stone Virgins*, the people of Kezi become victims of the Fifth Brigade, and dissidents like Sibaso also terrorize the people who no longer supported them. Sibaso's violent masculinity is performed in shedding blood through his beheading Thenjiwe before raping and mutilating Nonceba, her sister. However, hope for the nation is built through Cephas the historian and Thenjiwe's former lover, who comes to take Nonceba away from Kezi and helps her to heal.

Sibaso is a product of the turbulent 1970s that witnessed an increased political activism among students in colonial Rhodesia across racial and ethnic divides. *Feso* ideologically shapes his nationalism, and inspires him to become a liberation fighter in the second *chimurenga*, joining Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe Peoples' Liberation Army (ZIPRA). Vera invites the reader to explore the violent narrative of his life by giving Sibaso a voice against the fictional experience of *Feso*. In a flashback to Independence celebrations in 1980, Sibaso describes how he went to look for his father in Njube Township, but met a new occupant of his father's house who does not know his father, who informs him (and the reader) of Sibaso's previous identity as a student, and returns Sibaso's copy of the book *Feso* left behind at the house. Vera details the condition of the leaves of the book by drawing attention to the dead spider stuck to the print, leaving a spider stain on the fraying paper and fading ink (*Nehanda* 100-111) to draw the reader's attention to the nationalist ideology that needs re–examination and re–definition in the postcolonial nation. Sibaso's nationalist dream dies, as illustrated through the dead spiders he finds in *Feso*, in which Mutsvairo articulates the utopia of the pre–colonial age, one which inspired Sibaso to join the liberation war despite its ethnic dimension.

Sibaso is used by Vera to represent a generation that has been influenced by the type of nationalism portrayed in *Feso* – as both a soldier in the new army and dissident he embraces its nationalist ideology, and accepts its call to free the country. Sibaso depicts the tragedy of the post–colonial nation whose birth has been modelled on Mutsvairo's ethnic exclusivity. Detailing the consequent violence, Vera holds Mutsvairo accountable for creating a violently masculinist and ethnically exclusive nation. In "History has its Ceiling: The Pressure of the Past in *The Stone Virgins*", Ranger makes the connection of how *Feso* influenced and shaped actual nationalist struggle histories (213). Mutsvairo originates the current ZANU-PF political strategy of using the bones of dead politicians and ex–guerilla fighters as "texts and currency" belonging to the history of the struggle and sacrifice, encapsulated in the bones of fallen heroes and circulated as currency for national identity (Muchemwa,). In *The Stone Virgins*, rather than recreating a dual-sex system where women–heroes and weeping hunters both sacrifice for the nation, Vera explicitly questions the idea of sacrificial national identity, and particularly of a militarized masculinity that, in contrast to her weeping hunter, is murderous in interaction with femininity.

The Stone Virgins is crucial to Vera's larger fictional project because in it she shows that the dream of the green valley in Nehanda has been shattered as another war begins in 1981 during the Matabeleland atrocities, in which Mugabe's struggle for power and the moral authority to govern gain momentum. Describing the war as "bones rising anew", with explicit reference to Nehanda's words, Vera critiques this war as a form of "quasi–nationalism" in the sense defined by Webner (1991, 159 quoted in Raftopoulos, "Problematising" 128).

> The war begins. A curfew is declared. A state of emergency. No movement is allowed. The ceasefire ceases. It begins in the streets, the burying of memory. The bones rising. Rising. Every road out of Bulawayo is covered with soldiers and police, teeming like ants. Road blocks. Bombs. Landmines. Hand–grenades. Memory is lost. Independence ends. Guns rise. Rising anew. In 1980. (*The Stone Virgins* 59)

Vera parodies Nehanda's words and ironizes the interpretation of them as she critiques the post-colonial ethnic conflict and questions the purpose of the war.

Representative of nationalist memory is the official attitude to the iconic woman hero by Sibaso's claim that Nehanda "protects me with her bones" (107). This claim exists simultaneously with his violence against women, a violence that replicates the violence visited on Charwe/Nehanda by the British men and by the post–colonial leaders in Zimbabwe. The bones thus come to represent the violence inflicted on women's bodies, and the nation. However, Vera rebuffs this claim through Cephas, who adored Thenjiwe's hipbone, and Thenjiwe's spirit is continuously present in Nonceba and Cepha's relationship, while Cephas's memory, probably symbolic of Nehanda's

spirit, continuously resonates but at the same time rebuffs nationalist appropriations. *The Times* of 9 March 1998 reported that:

> A century after Nehanda's hanging [in the first Chimurenga] a medium from the Hurungwe tribal area of north Zimbabwe warned prime minister (Robert Mugabe) to make amends for offending ancestral spirits through his lack of contrition for brutal repression by the army. Reportedly he became deeply anxious. Ndebele mediums from southern Zimbabwe had condemned him since the mid–80s. (quoted in Driver and Samuelson, "History's" 112)

Even though Nehanda has been used as an embodiment of the nation, her bones keep rising through the voice of Thenjiwe and the different spirit mediums including Vera, "resisting the official memorialisation that would fix them in stone" (*ibid* 112) and snubbing state violence against minority groups .

2.5 Conclusion

Vera demonstrates that Mutsvairo gives birth to a tradition of nationalist masculinity that haunts the national and literary imaginary he has shaped. The nationalists hear Nehanda's prophecy, evoke it and it inspires their nationalism as they appropriate her voice for their own ends, whilst the British colonialists refused to hear, and underestimated her power and authority, to their detriment. Rather than countering these representations, male literary texts in the nationalist tradition continue to silence Charwe. While Nehanda's spirit, which becomes a fountain of military ascendancy, is celebrated and invoked, Charwe is explicitly silenced when her body is taken over by the spirit of Nehanda to further the interests of nationalists in producing a violent masculine-gendered nation. Vera challenges the narrative of heroism and liberates Nehanda/Charwe from the "frozen image", whilst enlivening it by re–writing the "actuality of her life". She re–inscribes into the nation the dual sex-power system by producing the hyphenated identity of woman–hero and, as her complementary figure, the weeping hunter, who together open up the fluid space between gender binaries, thereby deconstructing the public/private divide whilst claiming full citizenship for women. Through Cephas, Vera traces this figure into the future, inscribing it as an alternative model of masculinity for contemporary "new man" who is supportive of femininity and does not depend on women's subordination, a man who revises the past and builds the future.

Chapter 3: Colonial domesticities: gender roles on the farms, and in suburbs and townships

> "Marry young? Me I'd die first. Tie myself down to babies and housekeeping" (Lessing).[10]

> "[T]he way African writers enthuse about motherhood, one wonders if there are no women who hate child birth or have undeveloped maternal instincts" (Ogundipe-Leslie). [11]

3.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a comparative analysis of the representation of colonial masculinities and femininities, analysing Mary Turner's farm domesticity in *The Grass is Singing*, Martha Quest's farm childhood in *Martha Quest*, and her suburban domesticity in *A Proper Marriage*, as well as Phephelaphi's township domesticity in *Butterfly Burning*. Using the domestic house trope, the taboo walls reinforcing it, and the quest motif, the chapter reads Lessing as the literary creator of the questing rebellious woman image that now defines post-colonial Zimbabwean literary women in female-authored English fiction, such as Vera's fictional work. I analyse the image of the rebellious, questing women in conjunction with the image of the ineffectual husband (*The Grass is Singing*), the intrusive conventional mother and the absent father (*Martha Quest*), the violently jealous husband (*A Proper Marriage*) and the possessive boyfriend (*Butterfly Burning*). I analyse gender relations between men and women in the domestic space, focusing on how the questing woman negotiates with and around patriarchy in order to redefine her identity. The chapter argues that the taboo discursive space mapped out by Lessing in *The Grass is Singing*, *Martha Quest* and *A Proper Marriage*, and rebounding in Vera's *Butterfly Burning*, has opened up a space for women writers to re-create the questing, rebellious woman image.

Lessing's first novel, *The Grass is Singing*, is about Dick and Mary Turner who live on a Rhodesian farm in Southern Rhodesia, their failing marriage, and Mary's taboo intimate human relationship with her native domestic servant Moses. *The Children of Violence* series is autobiographical and comprises five novels: *Martha Quest, A Proper Marriage, A Ripple from the Storm, Landlocked* and *The Four-Gated City*. This discussion focuses on the first two novels. *Martha Quest* is about mother-daughter conflict. The conflict emanates from Mrs Quest's desire to control and shape her daughter, Martha, into a respectable young white British woman, but the

[10] Martha Quest in *Martha Quest*, p.19.
[11] Molara Ogundipe-Leslie cited in Nfah-Abenyi, Juliana Makuchi. *Gender in African Women's Writing*: *Identity, Sexuality and Difference.*

fifteen-year-old protagonist rebels. She flees to the city, and in rebellion against her mother's pressure for her to find a career, she marries Douglas. Their turbulent marriage and Martha's agonies of motherhood are the focus of *A Proper Marriage*. Vera's *Butterfly Burning* is based on the biographies of four women: Getrude, Deliwe, Zandile and their daughter, Phephelaphi. The main plot revolves around the conflict between Phephelaphi and her boyfriend, Fumbatha. The conflict emanates from Phephelaphi's quest for a career, while Fumbatha wants her to be the mother of his children. While pregnant Phephelaphi aborts her child and, when pregnant again, she incinerates her body and the foetus she is carrying.

The chapter has two sections: the first section is about farm and suburban domesticity in *The Grass is Singing*, *Martha Quest* and *A Proper Marriage*, and the second section focuses on township domesticity in *Butterfly Burning*. The first section discusses Lessing's struggle with colonial patriarchy (*The Grass is Singing*) to position Mary as the precursor of Martha Quest, the protagonist of *The Children of Violence* series. While Mary has no skills or intellectual ability to analyse her situation and articulate her wishes, her radical desires and heroic actions are verbalized and crystallised by Martha Quest in *The Children of Violence* series. The discussion focuses on Martha as a daughter in *Martha Quest* and as mother in *A Proper Marriage*. While Lessing fails to read the African woman and silences her, Vera fills the gap by representing black women's quest for freedom and self-defined femininity in the township in *Butterfly Burning*. I analyse Vera's representations of motherhood through Phephelaphi. The discussion maps out Zimbabwean women's legacy of struggle for freedom against colonial and indigenous patriarchy in the home and the nation.

Lessing has been positioned as a postcolonial woman writer (Muchemwa *Imagining*, Vise, "Then Spoke", Watkins "Remembering", Chennells "Postcolonialism," 8). This chapter suggests that Lessing is a literary precursor of Zimbabwean postcolonial women writers writing in English. While Vera claims Nehanda as an indigenous ancestor, granting her the authority of authorship as discussed in the previous chapter, and does not recognize Lessing as an inspiration, I propose that her subject matter, themes and characterisation define Lessing as a literary forerunner. Even though Lessing and Vera belong to different generations, cultural backgrounds and have different writing styles, I have put their texts in conversation with each other, because both authors and their textual female protagonists express their rebelliousness in terms of the institutions of domesticity, marriage and motherhood. Also, Lessing has pioneered the foregrounding of these taboo subjects in Zimbabwean women's literature written in English, which Vera echoes and claims as her signature mark (*Emerging Perspectives on Yvonne Vera* 348-9). Whereas Lessing witnesses the 1940s colonial and domestic ideology and taboos of the colonial Rhodesia she critiques, Vera was fifteen years old when Rhodesia became Zimbabwe. Thus, Vera revisits the

1940s from a 1990s perspective, to inscribe black women's history of rebellion against patriarchy and colonialism in the nation-state. The discussion will show how Vera consciously works with the colonial and post-colonial split in her representation of 1940s black women's township life in *Butterfly Burning*.

This chapter builds on the last one, which discusses the fluid gender roles in pre-colonial Zimbabwe that free Vera's Nehanda from domesticity and enable her to become a woman-hero (*Nehanda*), by interrogating colonial domestic ideology imported from the metropolis and rigidly imposed by colonial patriarchy in complicity with traditional patriarchy in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). The chapter adopts Lieske's definition of domesticity as "ideas and issues related to the organisation of men and women into two distinct spheres of activity: the masculine public sphere of politics and market-place, and the feminine private sphere of home and family life" (119). Interrogating the state of 1940s gender relations and images, women's struggle for freedom and their triumphant escape from colonial domesticity, the discussion will illustrate that what has been defined as private is already public. The discussion explores how gendered politics in the public space spills over into private space, intersecting with race, gender, sexuality and class to constitute the contemporary modern questing woman.

White colonial patriarchy and traditional patriarchy manufacture taboos that function differently to enforce and perpetuate domesticity. Taboo theorists define taboos as ethical codes of conduct in a society, anything to be avoided, forbidden, sacred, dangerous, threatening and used to instil fear (Mawere 29, Hastings 1954, Gelfand 1979, Tatira 2000). Lessing critiques the production of taboos by settler patriarchy to expedite the production of whiteness in colonial Zimbabwe. In "Doris Lessing and the Rhodesian Settler Novel," Chennels argues that settlers in colonial Zimbabwe aimed to construct a white Rhodesian identity and nationhood distinct from that of South Africa (32-33,102-3). He argues that Southern Rhodesia settler novels participated in this project by manufacturing myths that stereotyped blacks as inferior and whites as superior (Chennells 1995). The white superiority myth legitimised them as Rhodesians, while blacks' inferiority justified their exclusion. Because whiteness is defined in relation to white superiority over 'inferior, uncivilised' black Africans, settler society was in constant fear of "going native". Lessing illustrates how the fear of going native produced hysteria and paranoia in white society that necessitated the manufacture of colonial taboos for white women and all black people. The colonial taboos were interracial sexuality (*The Grass is Singing*), women's mobility, since "white girls don't walk alone" (*The Grass is Singing* 58-9, *Martha Quest* 57), sexuality (sex was a taboo subject for colonial mother figures, asexual women were tabooed and women's desire for sexual pleasure frowned upon) (*A Proper Marriage*, *The Grass is Singing* 40), the tabooing of women indifferent to motherhood and maternity and the tabooing of divorce (*A Proper Marriage*).

Lessing deploys taboos as a narrative technique to critique colonialism and domestic ideology for nurturing and sustaining fragile white Rhodesian identity and nationhood. Following in the footsteps of Lessing, the postcolonial writer Vera unflinchingly explodes these post-colonial taboos: women rape and commit infanticide (*Without a Name*), women are guilty of incest and murder (*Under the Tongue*), while female sexuality and the Matabeleland massacres are foregrounded (*The Stone Virgins*). However, the discussion here will focus on post-colonial taboos against abortion and suicide in Vera's *Butterfly Burning*. The main subjects of colonial and postcolonial taboos are dirt, pollution, defilement, desecration and abjection.

Lessing and Vera (re)create the contemporary questing rebellious woman image. In *Rebellious Women: The New Generation of Female African Novelists*, Cazenav defines a rebellious woman as a woman who writes about taboo themes. I adopt her definition to describe Zimbabwean women writers, but extend the concept to describe rebellious literary women. The questing rebellious heroine rejects and revolts against domesticity, patriarchal taboos, and the patriarchal image of a woman characterised by denying self, selflessness, all-suffering goodness and conformity to patriarchally prescribed feminine roles – and turns instead to successfully recreating herself as her own model of femininity, and attaining a fulfilling self-defined womanhood. Mary, Martha and Phephelaphi, try to fit into the patriarchal woman image by marrying, becoming domestic housewives and homemakers. But the domestic house constructed by patriarchy is a "coffin-like black box" (Hunter, "Marriage" 141) for Mary (*The Grass is Singing*), a battleground (*Martha Quest*), a war zone (*A Proper Marriage*), and a reproductive factory crushing Phephelaphi's dreams (*Butterfly Burning*). Feeling trapped and imprisoned, the protagonists embark on a quest journey in search of freedom and a self-defined identity.

The house trope, with its metaphors of containment and confinement, evokes feelings of body imprisonment, entrapment and suffocation, which trigger women's desire for freedom and escape. In the Zimbabwean literary tradition, the house is read as a metaphor for the nation. In *Imagining the City in Zimbabwean Literature 1949 to 2009*, Muchemwa reads the house trope through the literary history of the city, paving a way for my gendered historical analysis of domesticity and nationhood. Muchemwa posits that the (un)homely house is a metonym for the city and the nation. This thesis will expand his reading through a stronger focus on gender. When I re-approach the house trope through gendered lenses that conceive the house as a structure of domesticity, what comes to mind is how the gender politics of everyday life, enacted in the fictitious colonial homes of Southern Rhodesia, represent a larger social, political and economic drama, enacted in the nation and portraying the domestic space as an educational institution where hegemonic ideas about gender are taught, tested, accepted, challenged and rejected. In this chapter

I read the idealised patriarchal domestic house as claustrophobic and oppressive, therefore (un)homely, and the patriarchal nation as a "guillotine space" for women and children.

I use intersectional theory to analyse the constitution of gender. The notion of intersectionality was introduced by Crenshaw, and has been developed by contemporary feminists into fully-fledged intersectional theories (1989; Yuval-Davis, "Intersectionality" 2006). In "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics", Yuval-Davis explains that intersectional theory conceptualises the interrelationship of gender, class, race, sexuality, and ethnicity (193). I use Yuval-Davis's constitutive model of intersectional theory that is multiplicative, because it helps me approach gender as deeply racial, sexualised and classist, rather than an additive comprising gender, sexuality, class and race.

3.2 Farm domesticity in *The Grass is Singing* and *Martha Quest*, and suburban domesticity in *A Proper Marriage*

This section analyses the process of re-creating the self. I focus on the female quest figure, and the strategies she and her creator deploy to subvert patriarchally-defined femininity and transcend obstacles on the way to freedom in *The Grass is Singing*, *Martha Quest* and *A Proper Marriage*. I discuss a number of qualities I associate with white female domesticity – chastity, submissiveness, conservativeness, matriarchy, silence and domesticated womanhood – to analyse the response of white women to patriarchal constructions of white femininity. Mary Turner, unlike Mrs Slatter, slips from the pedestal of white femininity because her marriage is a failure. Confronted by an alien environment and an unfamiliar yet powerful black masculinity, Mary fails to conform to the traditional life of white woman as conservative and matriarchal. Her failure stages the beginnings of the non-conforming white settler woman in Lessing's fiction. Mary is the unsettled white woman who later develops into a different woman who unsettles white domesticity in *The Children of Violence* as Martha Quest.

The Grass is Singing is a ground-breaking novel because it conceives the questing woman embodied by Mary and introduces women's "quest fiction" (Greene "Feminist Fiction" 82) into the Zimbabwean women's literary tradition. In a different context, Greene explains that in women's quest fiction matrophobia (*ibid* 82),[12] which is the fear of becoming the mother, is a recurrent theme. The mother is often problematized – "seen as representative of the tradition that

[12] The term was coined in an essay on Lessing and Suckenick, and later used by Adrienne Rich. Lyn Sukenick, "Feeling and Reason in Doris Lessing's Fiction," *Doris Lessing: Critical Studies*. (ed.) Annis Pratt and L. S. Dembo. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, (1974) pp 102. See also Adrienne Rich. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. New York: Bantam (1977) 235.

the protagonist must define herself against and associated with the ending she tries to avoid" (ibid 82)[13]. Lessing recreates the Edwardian lady image embodied by Mrs Quest and Mrs Carson (*Martha Quest*), and Mrs Maynard and Mrs Talbot (*A Proper Marriage*), to explore the ways in which this metropolitan complex was exported to the colonies. The Edwardian generation of Mrs Quest exported the Victorian ideals of domesticity to the colony, and tried to build a British enclave in their domestic spaces. Mrs Quest brings her curtains and tea sets from Britain, and tries to plant vegetables from 'home'[14], like the Brussels sprouts. These mother figures cannot conceive of an identity outside marriage, and their lives revolve around making the home and managing the natives. They also play a significant role in gender construction in the colonies, by moulding their daughters to be respectable British girls (*Martha Quest*) and middle-class housewives (*A Proper Marriage*). Lessing's fiction rejects this patriarchal mother.

Lessing's questing daughters are in search of "something bigger….a different kind of life" (*The Grass is Singing* 39). Aged sixteen years, Mary escapes from her mother's unhappy marriage in the "little house that was like a small wooden box on stilts" shaken by trains (34, 39). She rejects her mother as a model of femininity and escapes to the city. She makes a conscious effort to forget her traumatising childhood of poverty and domestic violence. She recreates her self-image through a career, becoming a successful secretary. She stays in a single room at the girls' hostels in the suburbs, "leading the comfortable carefree existence of a single woman in South Africa" (44). Financial independence enables her to successfully recreate an economically independent happy white spinster self-image, living a happy, fulfilling single life.

The Grass is Singing conceives a rebellious female character who has no desire for sex, marriage and children. Mary has no desire for marriage, "When she thought about marriage she remembered her father coming home red-eyed and fuddled; when she thought of children she saw her mother's face at her children's funeral – anguished, but as dry and as hard as a rock" (39). Aged more than thirty years, her childish dressing, deportment and unerotic body removes her from the male gaze that sees women as sex objects (37). She is not curious about sex, "seemed not to care for men" (38), "felt disinclined, almost repelled, by the thought of intimacies and scenes of contact" (37), "had a profound distaste for sex" (39), "violent revulsion" against sex (42) and felt "rock-bottom aversion towards personal things like love and passion" (43). Mary does not fit into the patriarchal female mould characterised by motherhood: "the thought of a child's lips on her breasts made her sick" (132). She only desires a child "as a safety valve" to save her, later on in

[13] Greene gives a number of endings of this genre in a footnote on page 86 from different texts written in the 1970s. "Feminist Fiction, Feminist Form." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*. 1.2 (1990) 82-88.
[14] This sense of "home" as a distant place means that the white Rhodesian nation-place in not a home.

the text (Hunter 150). Mary's body rebels against normative patriarchal femininity characterised by erotic aesthetics, being available for male sexual pleasure, and natural love of motherhood.

Mary has an unconscious "contempt for [men]" (42), hated men in general and her father in particular. When her mother dies, she breaks contact with her father to avenge her mother's treatment and suffering (35). The narrator comments that:

> It never occurred to her that her father, too, had suffered. "About what? She would have retorted, had any one suggested it. "[H]e's a man, isn't he? He can do as he likes." She had inherited from her mother an arid feminism, which had no meaning in her own life at all, for she was leading the comfortable carefree existence of a single woman in South Africa, and she did not know how fortunate she was. (35)

The authorial voice sympathises with men and sees them as victims of hegemonic masculinity. The extract depicts Lessing's critique of the 1960s radical feminism that is antagonistic to all men, without any consideration of capitalist hegemonic masculinity dominating them. She describes it as "arid feminism," meaning that it is not productive[15]. Mary has not been equipped with the critical skills that can help analyse her father's position in a hierarchical patriarchal colonial capitalist society that has emasculated him. She thinks that all men have power and authority, yet her father is a victim of hegemonic masculinity and its capitalist system, exploiting his labourers and under-paying him. Lessing's Communist thinking enables her to analyse how the capitalist socio-economic structure, hegemonic white capitalist patriarchy, and its ideology of segregationist colonialism are the enemy, oppressing women, some men and all black people, and which needs to be dismantled.[16]

The economically independent happy white spinster image Mary carves out for herself quickly disintegrates when she hears her friends' gossip about her. Mary's married friends accuse her of "not playing her part, for she did not get married" (38). Thus, she is not performing colonial femininity appropriately. "She just isn't like that, isn't like that at all. Something missing somewhere" (40). The patriarchal femininity they subscribe to does not approve of her celibate lifestyle. The authorial voice comments that "It is terrible.…to destroy a person's picture of himself. How can one know he will be able to create another self to enable him to go on living? Mary's idea of herself was destroyed and *she was not fitted to recreate herself*" (my italics 44). In contrast to the authorial voice, I argue that Mary is able to recreate herself. Lacking intellectual skills to defend her choices against patriarchy and its gatekeepers, she feels pressured to conform

[15] Martin Shaw gives a critical interpretation of arid feminism in "Mothers, Other, and Lovers: Fiction and Ethnographic Contexts in Works by Yvonne Vera, Tsitsi Dangarembga, and Doris Lessing" (*Emerging Perspectives on Yvonne Vera*, 223-243.

[16] In her second autobiography, *Walking in the Shade* (1998), Lessing discusses her experiences in the Communist Party in Southern Rhodesia and Britain in the 1940s and 1950s.

to patriarchally-defined femininity. She naively marries Dirk Turner, a poor ineffective farmer. Dick marries her for companionship, because she is willing, and in his patriarchal mind she is adaptable to his needs. Thus, a loveless marriage is conceived.

The unhappy wife emerges the first day Mary arrives as a bride at Dick's rural farmhouse. Dick's "oven like little box of a house" is self-built with bricks, a zinc roof with no ceiling and self-furnished. She is disappointed with the house because it is "shut and dark and stuffy", evoking a sense of suffocation and entrapment (10, 52). The animal smell from the skins on the floor make her feel weak with foreboding: "[S]he got to her feet with an awkward scrambling movement, unable to bear it, possessed with the thought that her father, from his grave, had sent forth his will and forced her back into the kind of life he had made her mother lead" (54-55). The house is so hot that Mary has to wear a hat to protect her-self from the excessive heat. Her confinement in the "oven- like" house can be read in two ways. Clingman states that Mary is alienated from the veld, which she hates and fears, avoiding any real contact with it, and in place of contact there is projection: she feels the bush creeping in towards her (the significance of the title of the novel) ("Beyond the Limit" 244). I suggest that probably, Mary roasts herself alive in the "box-like oven house" because of an unconscious desire to "evaporate" from the house and the unhappy poverty-stricken marriage. An image of "a dried stick of a woman," with hair that had been bleached by the sun into a streaky mass falling round a scrawny face", is created in the oven-like house (175), foreshadowing Mary's self-willed death. I propose that the failed architecture of Dick's house is symbolic of the failure of patriarchal domestic ideology, signalling the collapse of imperial masculinity and colonialism.

Hunter states that Mary quickly embodies the modern middle-class feminine ideal ("Marriage" 57). The unhappy wife is replaced by "the maternal Angel in the House", "the Queenly Madonna" and "the Brave White Frontier woman", earnestly trying to manage Dick's inadequate house through the way she "maternally bestows the gift of herself" to Dick, who approaches her as a "humble stranger" during their first sexual contact (57). She claims and accepts the domestic space as her rightful place, symbolised by whitewashing the walls and redecorating the house. Marriage transforms her identity into the privileged middle-class domestic housewife of a colonial farmer, managing the domestic space, providing companionship to her husband and probably having children in the future.

The image of the run-away wife appears when Mary runs away from the farmhouse back to the city. Loneliness, poverty, heat, idleness and a realisation that there is no future for her on the farm force Mary to look elsewhere for an alternative space to reconstruct her self-image. She decides to retrieve her old life in the city, after seeing a job advertisement from her former employer. In the

city, Mary has no money to pay for accommodation and cannot be admitted to the girls' dormitory because she is married. She cannot ask for help from her friends because she is embarrassed by her looks, so she does not have the financial resources and emotional support necessary to recreate her self-image. Her optimism is totally shattered when her former male employer refuses to give her the job because of her altered physical appearance (100). Seeing the "innumerable humiliations and obstacles" in her path, she realises that her options are limited or non-existent (101). She resigns herself to fate and submissively goes back to the farm with Dick when he comes to collect her. Poverty and gender lock her back into the suffocating farmhouse. The text suggests that patriarchy has effectively set up structures that force women to submit to domesticity.

The text implies that what has been defined as private is actually public. Mary has no real power and authority in the house. When she asks Dick to put up a ceiling he refuses, saying there is no money, even though he ventures on unproductive farming projects (67). He is not affected by the heat because he is always outside on the farm. Dick brings Moses, one of the field workers, to be a domestic servant in the house and tells Mary that he should never be fired. He forces her to keep Moses even though she is afraid of him, because when she manages the farm during Dick's illness she whips him across the face. Driven insane by a purposeless life, Mary wants a child to occupy herself and find a purpose in life but he refuses, saying he will not bring up a child in such poverty. Thus, lack of economic power limits Mary's opportunities to make decisions in the home. Dick has economic power, which enables him to make decisions on the farm, and which gives him power over Mary. The text suggests that economic power gives males power over both public and private space.

Gender roles are redefined when indigenous men enter into the white domestic space as servants. Even though Mary is efficient at doing her work, colonial culture forces her to employ a domestic servant. Schmidt says the desire by white women to recreate the middle-class image, along the lines of middle-class Victorian housewives, put pressure on colonial women to employ servants (*Peasants, Traders,* 156). Even though the gender-specific task of domesticity implied the employment of female African domestic servants they were not employed, because this conflicted with European attempts to civilise and domesticate them, and European women's hostility and fear of African women's sexuality made it taboo (ibid 156-7). But, these white women had problems controlling black men, who resented doing the women's tasks and taking orders from them, as articulated by Charlie Slatter, "Niggers don't understand women giving them orders. They keep their own women in their place" (24). Mary (*The Grass is Singing*), Mrs Quest (*Martha Quest*) and Martha (*A Proper Marriage*) struggle to exert authority over their male native servants. Mary has no tact in dealing with strong native men, even though they were emasculated

by being called "house-boys". Male natives like Moses felt feminised in performing women's domestic roles, and were domesticated by being called house-boys, despite their being adults, with the noun "boy" infantilising them, and making them perpetual children.

The Grass is Singing awakens the colonial taboo of forbidden interracial sexuality. The presence of a powerful black African man in the domestic space, with Mary's forced proximity to him, opens up cracks in the colonial taboos regarding sexuality, race and class. Peeping through a crack becomes dangerous for Mary as her sexuality is awakened when she sees Moses bathing.[17] Their eyes meet, and "the formal pattern of black and white, mistress-and-servant had been broken by the personal relation" (144). She "sees in Moses a man" (Aghazadeh, "Sexual-Political" 115), with the "the powerful back stooping" (144), "the powerful, broad-built body fascinated her" (142), and the "thought of the African grew obsessive" (166,179). Her unmentionable erotic desire is portrayed through the imagery: "thick neck….the white lather was startlingly white against black skin" (144). Mary is forced "to confront her corporeality" (Grogan "(Im)purity" 39), becoming more aware of her body (*Grass* 144, 145). The domestic space becomes highly charged with sexual tension and "psychological threat and promise" (Clingman "Beyond the Limit" 246), despite the strong barriers of race and class. Not knowing how to define her feelings of sexual desire, and projecting her own fear of incest with her father as repressed sexuality, Mary succumbs to a "nervous condition" (Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 1986).

The taboo against interracial sexuality was central to segregation, and materialises the "black peril" myth. Black peril is the perceived threat of rape posed by black men to white women (McCulloch 4, see also Graham 2012). Fear of rape was instilled in white girls from a very young age, to restrict white women's mobility, and confine them to the houses which they were taught to view as safe. Mary's mother forbids her to talk to the servants or to walk alone outside the house. When she asks why, she is told in a furtive lowered voice that "they were nasty and might do horrible things to her" (58). The authorial voice says, "Every woman in South Africa is brought up to be" (58-9) afraid of black men. Ironically, the authorial voice comments that the narrator "had read enough about psychology to understand the sexual aspect of the colour bar, one of whose foundations is the jealousy of white men towards the supposed superior sexual potency of the native (186). Also, researchers have argued that there was no evidence of white women being raped; but the anxiety had political triggers (McCulloch 1927, Graham 2012). Despite lack of evidence, in 1903 Immorality Suppression Ordinance No. 9 prohibiting illicit sexual relations

[17] Loneliness and being confined to the domestic house induces depression in many colonial women, and they develop affairs or have private lovers to cope, as portrayed in Lessing's short story "Lucy Grange".

with blacks was passed. The terms of the ordinance were extended under Immorality and Indecency Suppression Ordinance No. 1, which prescribed two years in jail for any girl or woman who by words, writing, signs, or suggestion enticed a native to have illicit sex (McCulloch 7)[18]. "The legislation suggests that *Black Peril* was as much about gender conflict within white society as about racial conflict between settlers and Africans" (McCulloch 7). The texts suggest that black peril was about hierarchical boundaries between men and women in white community, and between black men and white settlers. However, black women became domestic servants because of the black peril scares, and also the need for more male labour in the industries in the late nineteenth century (Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders* 1992).

There are strong indications that a "queer" sexual relationship develops between Mary and Moses to use Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's notion of queer as meaning "across", "across genders, across sexualities…queer is antiseparatist as it is antiassimilationist….[I]t is relational and strange" (xii) and "sexually dissident loves" (xiii)…are what "happens across the lines that divide, race, class, gender" (xiii). I adopt Sedgwick's queer concept to analyse the intimate queer relationship nurtured by Moses and Mary. Moses crosses the taboo lines of race, employer, servant and class when he brings "little gifts of a handful of eggs from the compound fowls, or a twist of flowers from the bush" (156) which are accepted by Mary. In the bedroom dressing table scene, Tony Marston witnesses strange behaviour that is at odds with the colour bar settler ideology. He is surprised to see "one of the guarded, a white woman, so easily evading [the colour bar] barrier" (186). Mary sits "in a garish pink petticoat" combing her hair in front of a mirror, while "the native dresses her" (185). She commits the colonially unthinkable by allowing Moses to touch the sacred body of a white woman. She thanks Moses in an intimate voice, and tells him to leave the bedroom before Dick comes: "You had better go now. It is time for the boss to come." (185) The quotation suggests that Mary and Moses have a secret intimate relationship that should not be known by Dick. The gifts brought by Moses and accepted by Mary, and the dressing table scene, illustrate that Mary no longer adheres to the colonial code of racial separation. However, Mary acknowledges the humanity only of Moses, while her prejudice towards other black men and women does not change.

While the text does not make it clear whether sexual intercourse occurs, a queer sexuality is evident. At first, Tony believes they had a sexual relationship, but discards his suspicions. But then it is difficult to trust his judgement, because of his black stereotypes. When told by the

[18]McCulloch, Jock. *Black Peril, White Virtue: Sexual Crime in Southern Rhodesia, 1902-1935*. Most of the legislation was modelled after the South African Mines and Works Amendment Act (1926), the Natives (Urban Arrears) Act (1923), the Immorality Act (1927), and in Rhodesia the 1930 Land Apportionment Act.

doctor he met who had been in the country for a long time that a "number of white women….had relations with black men, he felt it would be like having a relation with an animal" (186). But Mary's reaction on seeing Tony standing in the bedroom door way is very suggestive: she "stopped dead, and stared at [Tony] with fear, then her face from being tormented, became slowly blank and indifferent" (186). When Tony questions her, "She lifts her head sharply, and her eyes became cunning" (186) and defensive, saying he has little work. Her body language and emotional fluctuation seem to suggest that Mary is consciously aware that she has crossed colonial taboo lines of forbidden sexuality. A sexual relationship is also intimated in the last chapter of the novel, when she says, "They said I was not like that, not like that, not like that" (187). She repeats the statement her gossiping friends made in the first chapters of the novel, furtively sly, yet triumphant (187). The triumphant tone and attitude illustrate that in Mary's mind, she has proved her gossiping friends wrong: she is like that with Moses.

Some critics argue for Mary's madness to interpret her sexual dissidence (Clingman, "Beyond the Limit" 1991, Hunte,r "Madness" 2009, Hunte,r "Marriage" 73, 78). Charlie Slatter, the powerful patriarch who "personified society" for the Turners (13), cannot comprehend Mary's deviant behaviour. White society views her disobedience towards patriarchal social prescriptions for white female identity and ideology as madness. Mary's metaphorical madness can be read as a synecdoche of the madness of racist colonial society. It can also be read in terms of revolt against colonial taboos as reflected by the omniscient narrator: "[S]he had shut out everything that conflicted with her actions, which would revive the code she had been brought up to follow" (187). The quotation suggests that Mary's conscious action of "shutting out everything that conflicted with her actions" (187) is not madness, but a subversive strategy which enables her to transcend and transgress colonial boundaries of race, gender, class and sexuality without fear. Mary and her creator push colonial taboos into the public realm to expose and neutralise the fear of taboos attached to the white female body, demystifying the sacredness of white womanhood, while exposing the lie of white superiority circulated by colonial patriarchy. The text argues for the existence of mutual intimate human relationships between white women and black men to discredit the black peril myth, and destabilise the interracial walls of sexuality, race and class.

Mary attains individuation and a self-defined subjectivity through her self-willed death. Aghazadeh argues that Mary fails to attain individuation and transcend her gendered subjectivity and class, and is an "accidental heroine" ("The Sexual-Political" 120), is an "accidental rebel" (Fishburn, "The Manichean Allegories" 2), and a victim of the men who dominate her (Lalbakhsh and Yahya, "Engendering the Feminine Power" 2011), while others have criticised Lessing for punishing her transgressive characters (Grogan, "Purity and Danger" 34). I propose that Mary is representative of an emerging new woman who takes control of her own body, life and destiny.

She consciously decides not to depend on or rely on men like Dick or the English man to save her (200-1). She also denies the patriarchal Slatter power and authority over her destiny when he tries to evict the Turners from their farm as punishment for letting down their race, rather choosing to die. Thus the text suggests that Mary wins in her struggle against patriarchy.

The Grass is Singing deconstructs taboos around suicide, portraying it rather as a form of escape from unpleasant patriarchal environments. In a different context, Crater reads nineteenth- and twentieth-century female heroines' deaths as a "necessary step in the process of expressing female subjectivity" ("In their death they were not divided" 149). Mary "has prophetic prescience and an anticipatory sense of the future that give [her] the ability to see through things and to have knowledge of and plan for the events of [her] life" (Lalbakhsh and Yahya, "Engendering the Feminine Power" 32). She is "conscious" of her actions and surroundings and has a "prophetic" vision of her death (193). She could have avoided it, but instead, feeling cornered, helpless, trapped and "shut in a small black box, the walls closing in on her, the roof pressing down" she escapes from the house, "propelled by fear, but also by knowledge" to meet her death (203). There is no viable way out for Mary, the domestic house is a "black box," and marriage a "coffin," while her sexuality makes her a taboo object, so the only way out is through suicide. Her self-willed death is an escape from patriarchal domesticity and the oppressive racist society. Mary's own point of view represents her death "as an act of liberating fulfilment" (Wang, "White Postcolonial Guilt" 42).

Moses does not say why he kills Mary, though the text insinuates that he kills her because of jealousy: "[W]hat thoughts of regret, or pity, or perhaps even wounded human affection were compounded with the satisfaction of his completed revenge, it is impossible to say" (206). Critics have found the scene where Moses kills Mary objectionable because of its mythopoeic and natural symbolism (Hunter, "Marriage"154-5). Colin Style links the scene of the murder to the revenge of the first *chimurenga* of 1896-7 that haunted whites after they crushed the rebellion, prefiguring the second *chimurenga* (cited in Visel 159). Robin Visel convincingly places the killing scene and the natural phenomenon of violent thunder heralded before Moses violently stabs Mary with a sharp object, silencing her when she is about to apologise, within the Zimbabwean literature of *chimurenga* ("Then Spoke the Thunder" 157). In the third *chimurenga* discourse, "the bush has avenged itself" as envisioned by Mary, as white farmers have been violently removed from their farms.

The image of the destruction of the house envisioned by Mary before her death symbolises her demolition of the domestic home and everything it represents (195-6). "When she was gone, she thought, this house would be destroyed. It would be killed by the bush …. She could see the

house, empty, its furnishings rotting" (195). The forceful violent destruction is evident in the images of rats "gnawing and gutting till nothing was left," "armoured beetles would crawl in," "then the ruins would break," the "rain would drum down on the roof, on and on, endlessly, and the grass would spring up in the space of empty ground about the house" and "pull down the tins of plants, so that they [were] crushed into polluting masses," window panes broken, "trees would press against the brick, until the last leaned and crumbled and fell, a hopeless ruin": "there would be nothing left" (195-6). The destruction of her body is synonymous with the demolition of the house, probably signifying the destruction of patriarchal culture, domesticity ideology and colonial society. Mary is a questing heroine because she transcends the obstacles of marriage, domesticity, and colonial taboos on interracial sexuality and suicide.

Martha Quest shifts from the environmentally unsuitable Turner house, to the Quest hybrid farmhouse, similar to Lessing's parents' house in Southern Rhodesia, where she emigrated with her parents when she was five years old. Mrs Quest suggests the ship-like design, Mr Quest draws the foundation plan, and the natives construct the house with pole, "dagga", and thatch roofing. It is a symbiosis of colonial and indigenous architecture[19], built with indigenous material. The hybrid house represents a missed opportunity by the colonial women and men to build an inclusive culture, home and nation, but might also signify that what they refuse has already happened: a hybrid culture is the legacy of modernity. Chennells argues that Lessing is a post-colonial writer because she "is at one with post-colonial theorists who proclaim cultural hybridity as the irretrievable condition of post-colonial modernity" ("Postcolonialism" 8). The futility of purity and exclusion is depicted in Martha's naïve vision of the Four-Gated City. "Outside one of the gates stood her parents, the Van Rensbergs, in fact most of the people of the district, forever excluded from the golden city because of their pettiness of vision and small understanding; they stood grieving, longing to enter, but barred by the stern and remorseless Martha" (17). Lessing seeks to exclude satirizes white colonial false claims of superiority, through Martha's childish righteousness, of excluding everyone because of their conventionality, the colour-bar and their lack of imagination. That is exactly what she is doing.

Martha Quest shifts attention to a mother and daughter struggle. Through the persona of the questing heroine Martha, Lessing depicts "the psychic dilemmas produced in the 'modern' woman raised by a 'traditional' mother. As traditional sex roles break down, women search for autonomy, potency, and wholeness outside their maternal role." (Rosen, "Martha's Quest" 54) Martha "[does] not [want] to be her mother" or any of the settler women (10). Mrs Quest

[19] The Quest house is big, divided with straight lines into many rooms as recommended for colonial architecture. Victoria Rosner. "Home Fires: Doris Lessing, Colonial Architecture, and the Reproduction of Mothering." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*. 18.1 (1999) 59-89.

represents the image of a woman that Martha seeks to escape, as reflected in her vow: she "would not be bitter and nagging and dissatisfied, like her mother" (16). Martha's irritation "overflowed into dislike of both her parents" (8). The source of her anger towards her parents is their resignation to fate, instead of accepting reality, adjusting, adapting, and being proactive and creative to rescue the family from poverty. The mother becomes the target of hate and aggression because Mrs Quest is a witch-like figure in Martha's eyes. Martha fails to write her school examinations because of pink-eye, and her mother takes her out of school, so she fails to write the matric examinations that might have allowed her to escape from the farmhouse (30-31). She feels as if some kind of a spell has been cast on her, she is being dragged towards fate and doom against her will by her mother. Also, she "accused her mother, in her private thoughts, of being responsible" for her father's failure (25-6), and of nurturing her brother's hypocrisy and self-conceit. The bone of contention is that Mrs Quest is conservative and overruled by sensibility, thus failing to provide her with the model of femininity she desires. Also, she thinks her mother has castrated her father and brother. The text represents Mrs Quest as a bad mother.

The bad mother image embodied by Mrs Quest has its cultural origin in the United States and early European feminist thought. Lessing's representation of mother-daughter relations is probably influenced by her precursor Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, which traces the mother-daughter struggle. There is rivalry between the mother and her independent daughter. In the first epigraph, Martha declares her rejection of domesticity and patriarchal motherhood (19). Lessing's heroine, Martha, is modelled on Oliver Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*.[20] The opening epigraph of Schreiner's novel, "I am so tired of it, and also tired of the future before it comes", is reflected in how Martha is "fearful of her own future," and feels "that now it was time to move on to something new" (15). The younger generation of contemporary daughters, represented by Martha, is afraid of "the nightmare of repetition" (77, 95). The repetition is represented by the mother, the good woman of patriarchy who religiously submits to patriarchally defined femininity. Martha is resentfully conscious that she is expected to carry the patriarchal feminine burden of domesticity, race, gender and class, and consciously develops a weapon which would enable her to carry it: "focus a dispassionate eye on that misery. The detached observer" (14). She wages a battle against the pressing image of the older, lifeless, unfulfilled women around her: "the heroines she had been offered, and discarded them. There seemed to be a gap between herself and the past" (16-7). The lives of the older generation of women are not suggestive of the way a younger generation of women might recreate their identities in opposition

[20] In "Two Versions of a White African Girlhood: *The Grass is Singing* and *Children of Violence*", Rowe states that Schreiner's influence can also be traced in the intellectual life of Doris Lessing, who in her afterword to *The Story of an African Farm* stated that she was fourteen when she read it, and it was the first book she had met that had Africa for a setting - and the book became part of her (*Women Writers: Doris Lessing*. Macmillan. (1994) pp 13-14).

to societal norms. The mother, the books and colonial society are criticised for failing to provide alternative role models or alternative fulfilling opportunities for women.

Martha turns to the African landscape and its inhabitants as a source of new knowledge to recreate herself. One day, as she walks from the shops alone, Martha experiences a spiritual mythic moment. She feels "a slow integration" with the world around her, everything "became one, shuddering together in a dissolution of dancing atoms," "her flesh was the earth...and her eyes stared, fixed like the eye of the sun", and she realises the futility of herself in the world (61-3). Nature becomes the source of untapped knowledge that the arrogant, conceited, prejudiced, racist colonial settler with a superiority complex cannot tap into. Unlike her precursor Mary, who felt alienated from the African setting and its inhabitants, and her mother who fears the landscape, Martha claims it and identifies with it. She discovers that "What was demanded of her was that she should accept something quite different: it was as if something new was demanding conception, with her flesh as host, as if it were a necessity, which she must bring herself to accept, that she should allow herself to dissolve and be formed by that necessity" (62). The quotation suggests that there was a fusion of Martha and nature, creating something new. Her quest takes shape when she allows herself to "be formed by that necessity" (62). However, a split personality emerges when Martha accepts the interdependence of the indigenous and the foreign. The critical self and the pleasing Martha are born, and her journey of self-discovery begins.

The Quest farmhouse becomes a battleground, filled with constant bickering and fights between mother and daughter. Martha faces her domestic life on the farm "with a dubious confidence, what she knew would be a long fight.…Saying to herself, I won't give in. I won't; though it would have been hard for her to define what it was she fought" (26). The "sudden climax after a long brooding underground rebellion" begins when Martha turns seventeen. Adhering to the social conventions of nice middle class marriageable and accomplished girls, Mrs Quest tries to push back Martha's budding sexuality and the battle about clothes rages on for months (26). Martha refuses to be the nice girl, and comes out wearing a self-made white dress to a dinner-dance. The white dress symbolically foreshadows her escape through marriage.

In search of a rescuer hero, Martha turns to her father. But he is reluctant to support her in any way. He fails in his fatherly role, because his sense of self died in the First World War, where he lost his other leg. He fails to acknowledge his daughter's burgeoning sexuality in the bedroom scene, when he finds Martha cutting up the childish dress to spite her mother. The second time she comes to her father triumphantly, "Do I look nice, Daddy" (*Martha Quest* 69). Again, he fails to support his daughter. Martha also resents him and is not sympathetic to her father's illness and disability, which he uses to justify his failures. Martha's vision of her parents' generation portrays

the disregard of her father: "beside these women a series of shadow dependent men, broken-willed and sick with compelled diseases" (109). Like Lessing's parents, he was seduced into immigrating to Southern Rhodesia by promises of easy money from maize-growing by the Empire Exhibition.[21] He acts on impulse, is a dreamer, and daringly immigrates to Southern Rhodesia in search of freedom, but without considering how he was going to farm as a disabled person. He emigrated in search of a freer and less constrained life, and because he enjoyed country life and the natural world. Because he is a dreamer and imaginative, he is able to disconnect himself from the daily routine, and gaze at the stars and the universe. He is not a conventional conformist man, as illustrated by his responses when Martha's marriage breaks down, and his words "cause Martha to realise her desire to escape her marriage" (Rowe, "Women Writers" 6). Thus, despite all his faults, Martha chooses him over her rigid conservative mother.

Martha provokes another heated argument by defying one of the crucial colonial taboos: "white girls don't walk alone" (57). Mrs Quest tries to enforce spatial restrictions to protect her daughter from rape by natives (47). Sarcastically, Martha tells her mother that, "If a native raped me, then he'd be hung and I'd be a national heroine, so he wouldn't do it, even if he wanted to, and why should he?" (47). Martha finds the fears absurd, she "could not remember any case of this happening, it was one of the things people said" (47). Unlike her mother, who is confined to the house by fear instilled by colonial patriarchal taboos, Martha refuses to be confined and imprisoned by unproven and unjustified fear of attack and rape. She secretly wanders far away from the house to the mountains, and goes to native compounds to play with native children, defying her mother's orders.[22] Martha rebels against the colonial taboos of the black peril myth and patriarchal prescriptions of safety created to confine and imprison women.

Martha attacks the white hypocrisy of the colour-bar and the black peril in colonial Zimbabwe (64, 48). The black woman is not protected from rape, as the focus is on white women and black men. When a white man rapes a black girl, he is fined five pounds, but a black man is killed even for suspected rape (47). She rebels against the colonial ideology of double standards, which forces white colonial women to be chaste, pure, virtuous, moral guardians, prohibiting interracial sexuality, while white men are free to sleep with whoever they like, men like Mr MacFarline in *Martha Quest* whose compound is full of coloured children he has fathered with black women. Mr Maclntosh in "The Ant Heap", and George Chester in "Leopard George" have sexual relationships with black women, and have fathered children for whom they refuse to take fatherly responsibility, but are not condemned by white colonial society. Martha eagerly escapes from the

[21] Victoria Rosner in "Home Fires" gives a detailed explanation and pictures of the Empire Exhibition.
[22] In the short story "This was the old chief's country" she goes to the chief's village, and learns about the history of the land her father has claimed to be his.

(un)homely farm house and stifling community by going to the city. She envisions the city as free, but discovers that patriarchal values are present, as girls become trophies at the club house. She hurriedly marries Douglas and this marriage is the focus of *A Proper Marriage*.

A Proper Marriage shifts to a suburban house in the green, leafy Avenues suburb. The northern suburbs are inhabited by professionals and senior civil servants. The affluent, self-indulgent society Martha is introduced to by her marriage is concerned only with mortgage and hire purchase payments (276). The society frowns upon married women with children working, as they are supposed to make the house a haven for the husband to retreat to from the pressures of public life. Like many young husbands, Douglas behaves in a rather proprietorial way, which makes Martha angry (276). He finds satisfaction in Martha's domestic role, and his public civil servant role. His selfishness is evident when he buys a well-furnished big suburban house without consulting his wife, Martha. The big sterile house has many rooms, a big kitchen with modern devices and a garden. The features of the sterile patriarchal domestic house are: a lack of emotional and intellectual stimulation, as well as boredom and suffocating, unfulfilling marital sex, sexless marriages, infidelity and domestic violence. Martha's creativity is killed because her only responsibility is to manage the four domestic servants. Even though Martha has everything every bourgeoise colonial woman would dream of – economic security, a child, house and a financially supportive husband – she wants a different script for herself. The status of suburban middle-class wife does not bring the protagonist happiness and fulfilment; she seeks for a self-defined female subjectivity.

The veranda is a common feature of colonial architecture on the farms and in the suburbs. Specifically, the house and its veranda "illustrate how boundary markers were deployed to police the doctrine of racial hierarchy and how notions of femininity and domesticity, seemingly marginal to colonization, undergirded the project of empire" (59). The veranda lies between public and private spaces, and could have been a transitional space for gender, but it becomes a place confirming gendered race and class identities. Men and women sit on different sides, women talking about domesticity and men about business, politics and farming (*Martha Quest*). In *The Grass is Singing* Mary pays workers on the veranda and finds satisfaction in it, but cultural conditioning makes her retreat into the domestic space to allow Dick to be the masculine man she romanticises and desires. It becomes a space for projections of fear, sundowner parties, gossip and constructions of gender. The veranda at Colonel Bradshaw's house in the northern suburbs depicts the construction of the bourgeois white settler subject through the successful people in their trades, businesses or farmers who are invited to their sundowner parties. Martha's rite-of -passage into respectable white society with its narrow codes of racism, class, respectability and

domesticity happens there. Those who fail, like the Turners, are viewed as betrayers of the superior white colonial identity.

A group of "pioneer women" play a pivotal role in making familial patriarchal homes in colonial Zimbabwe, as depicted in the vociferous congratulations and smothering embraces over Martha's marriage (Boggie, *Experiences of Rhodesia's Pioneer Women* 342). Rhodesia's "founding mothers" (*First Steps in Civilizing* 1940), Mrs Maynard, Mrs Talbot and Mrs Carson, secure white hegemony and homes in support of the established patriarchal order and they induct Martha into middle-class subjectivity. Their actions invoke "internal self-dialogue" (*Reconstructing Subjectivity* 16), as Martha becomes constantly critical of the circle into which she has married. I adopt Find's "dialogic concept of self" (*Reconstructing Subjectivity* 16) to analyse how Martha re-creates her subjectivity (ibid 18). Using focalized narration, irony and sarcasm, the viewpoint created is that of the sceptical Martha, looking for "the spiritual hangers-on which every marriage attracts….What is it they themselves have found, or lack, in marriage?" (354). Ironically, Mrs Maynard's husband, who officiates at the marriage, is having an affair. The "proper marriages" are loveless and sexless. Mrs Talbot and Mrs Quest keep photos of their dead lovers who died in the First World War as memories, while Mrs Maynard, a leading city matriarch, and Mrs Talbot turn to charity work to fulfil their empty marriages. The empty, loveless, sexless marriages and photos of dead lovers expose the fictions of domestic bliss. Martha realises that the excitement about her marriage is not about her, but about patriarchal achievement (353, 354).

Their lived experiences, particularly those of Martha's mother, force her to reflect and envision her own life at their age, and she sees the nightmare of repetition. She realises that

> Neither she nor her mother had any validity as persons, but were mere pawns in the hands of fatality. She could see a sequence of events, unalterable, behind her, and stretching unalterably into the future. She saw her mother, a prim-faced Edwardian schoolgirl, confronting, in this case, the Victorian father, the patriarchal father with rebellion. She saw herself sitting where her mother now sat, a woman horribly metamorphosed, entirely dependent on her children for any interests in life, resented by them ….(109).

She feels pity for her mother's misspent and unfulfilled life. She understands that these women were raised on Victorian values in Britain. They position themselves in the colony as the authoritative Englishwomen, redefining domesticity modelled on the metropolis (Cairnie, "Women and the Literature of Settlement"). Lessing depicts white women as "an inferior sex within the superior race" (Strobel xi cited in Cairnie 169). But they assimilate colonial discourse into their own self-concept, and participate in the imperial project as guardians of the colonial order. Their power and authority materialise from domesticity, managing the domestic servants and nurturing children.

A Proper Marriage puts the corporeality of a woman's body at the centre of the reproduction debate. The text deconstructs the idealised patriarchal image of maternity expressed in Mrs Quest's assertion that pregnancy is "the greatest experience in a woman's life" (425, 420). Martha pays attention to her bodily transformation during her pregnancy, "stomach changing [ski on the slopes,] breaking into purple…thighs…were red straining patches…breasts were heavy, bruised looking…brief flowering" of youth gone. (425)

The extra-fictional device of the epigraph framing Part 11 of the novel opens: "You must remember that having a baby is a perfectly natural process" (from the handbook on how to have a baby, which establishes "the relationship between history and the text", and foregrounds patriarchal thinking on maternity). Lessing counters this by opening the maternity ward doors. The reader enters the labour ward, which is referred to as an overcrowded reproductive factory (465). Martha is "astonished and indignant at the violence of it" – "the hot wave of pain", "the pain swallowing her up", "the dark engulfing sea" of pain intensifies, she shuts her teeth, as the pain grips her back, then her stomach, and "she felt as if she and the baby were being wrung out together by a pair of enormous steel hands," as time stopped, the hot wave of pain swept up her back, and she entered a place where there was no time at all. An agony so unbelievable gripped her, it was a pain so violent that it was no longer pain, but a condition of being. Every particle of flesh shrieked out, while the wave spurted like an electric current from somewhere in her backbone and went through her in shock after shock (468-9). Martha gives birth to a baby girl, Caroline. The heroine's ability to go through the labour pain with dignity and survive it evokes admiration. Lessing textually separates the foetus and the mother, to render the woman's body visible. The text banishes the patriarchal taboos on maternity, and exposes the lie in the romantic patriarchal image of maternity.

Martha's post-delivery traumatic stress draws sympathy from the reader. Her emotional collapse is accompanied by bodily changes, swollen breasts, and milk which flowed through her a dozen times a day like a tide (478). She thought that when she got home she would be ugly and shapeless, and would be bound for months and months of servitude, without any escape from it. She found herself regarding the infant with detached scrutiny and disliking the child. The hate emanates from her crushed dreams about having a job or a career as she had planned (414). She does not want to have her whole life caught in the rhythm of a small child (534), bound in a small room to a child for twentyfour hours, with years of that life ahead (539). As Caroline grows, she resents her more. The text represents biology as entrapping women. Martha wants to be the woman "who combined a warm accepting femininity and motherhood with being what Martha described vaguely but to her own satisfaction as 'a person'" (540). The failure of colonial society

to enable a woman to be a mother and anything else she might want triggers hate for the child, maternity and motherhood.

Martha is "little fitted for maternity, as her mother had been". Her sense of motherhood is so negative that she does not care if the child eats, and not caring is the way to break the emotional filial bond: "she must break the bond!"(538). She reasons that she has to break the cycle of determination and emotional connection to free the child from antagonism. The text recreates an image of the unmaternal, to debunk the myth of a mother's unconditional love. The text shows that a mother can hate her own progeny and can inflict harm on the child if circumstances force her to do so. Confronted with "modern women's dilemma as she confronts her potential motherhood, she abandons the child and walks out of the domestic house" (539).

In "Doris Lessing's Rhodesia" Steele states that "The Second World War provides the dynamic element of change which transforms Martha from one of many colonial suburban housewives and the imposed strains of modern society in general, into an independent woman" (53).[23] The first thing Martha does is to transcend the cycle of procreation. As Caroline turns three years old, "Martha knew her female self was sharply demanding that she should start the cycle of birth again" (593). She resists the sharp physical yearning for a baby, an insistent and painful craving she felt when she saw her friends' children. To counter that desire, she remembers the agonies of maternity during the birth of Caroline, and chooses not to begin the cycle again (593). She creates the image of a brooding mother with a flock of children, comparing her to a literary character Natasha, a critical young woman typist who is bound to a business office, falls in love with a junior partner and the process starts all over again (620). Even thoug, under pressure to have a baby from Douglas, her mother and the suburban wives she resists. Next, she rejects the companionship of the suburban housewives tea party circle at the Avenues. She finds the domestic talk about responsibilities, reproduction and procreation sterile, boring, and stifling to her imagination, and she withdraws from the group. Finally, she joina is not worried about personal issues. At the communist group women discuss male tyranny against women in Russia and how to free them. Jasmine helps Martha understand why Douglas is jealous and violent: his "property instinct is outraged" (637). She encourages her to leave Douglas and focus on the revolution. The text argues for an understanding of the complexity of feminine identity and the barriers women have to transcend to attain individuality in a patriarchal society that does not offer them alternatives.

[23] *Doris Lessing*. Ed. Eve Bertelsen and Stephen Gray. *Southern African Literature Series.* No. 5.

A Proper Marriage does not have a romantic "happily ever after" ending. Martha has been dragged into wifehood by forces beyond her own control, even though intellectually she resists. She dreads the role of wife and mother, as reflected in the first epigraph from *Martha Quest*. She resents Douglas, disdains housework and finds everything false. These feelings trigger an emotional crisis. For her the marriage does not exist: "so strong was the feeling of being free. She was regarding her marriage, the life she was committed to, with a final, horrified dislike" (342). "She did not feel like Douglas's wife or Caroline's mother" (591). Pressure and tension build up between Martha and colonial patriarchy, colonial matriarchs and suburban housewives in their struggle to preserve the family. Mrs Talbot is shocked when she says, "Besides, we don't get on sexually" (591), because for her generation marriage is about preserving the family and sex has nothing to do with it. Mrs Talbot's reaction makes Martha realise that sex is a taboo word, and what is ugly about sex is talking about it (675-6). She also realises that what the women find disheartening is that she does not say that Douglas treats her badly. "When a woman leaves her husband she is forgiven on one condition: that she complains shrilly about how badly he treats her. Then certain women will champion her….They won't forgive me, because I have no intention of complaining. Outraged feminists" (369). The quotation is a critique of radical and liberal feminism that championed women's rights and campaigned against domestic violence in the second wave of feminism. Martha is intellectually astute in her quest for freedom and individuality. She critiques colonial society, articulating her rebellious feelings towards marriage and motherhood.

The big suburban house becomes a war zone as Douglas battles to keep the marriage and force his wife to submit to normative patriarchal femininity. The source of conflict is that Martha insists on the right to behave as a man would and have an affair. She does not want to conform to the rules of female sexuality and live according to the ideals of a chaste pure and submissive married woman. She is a non-conformist and does not believe in jealousy or fidelity. She believes that since her husband is having an affair he should understand her sexual feelings for William, a member of the communist group. She tells him that she is in love with a corporal in the Air Force, and proposes to have a love affair with him (654). She thinks her marriage to Douglas is modern, but she misreads her conventional husband. Douglas forbids it and prohibits her from going to the communist group. She cannot endure married life, and chooses the radical action of divorce. He tries to use Caroline as emotional blackmail. But eventually the rejected man reacts violently, threatening to shoot Caroline, Martha and him-self. Martha refuses to succumb to his antics, walking out on her child and husband. She becomes an active member of the communist group. The text dismantles the foundational architecture of patriarchy, the family, by exposing the fictions of domesticity, enabling Martha to divorce, and model an alternative self-fulfilling

identity. Martha is a rebellious quest heroine, because she transcends the barriers of marriage, motherhood and domesticity, and becomes the model of a contemporary modern career woman. Martha is a prototype of modern woman who achieves self-styled emancipation by being critical and questioning patriarchal thinking and values, overtly rebelling against established values and beliefs in the home and nation. As Martha's character and consciousness develop from her experiences in the home, she engages in radical subversive ways to fight and champion the cause of those oppressed and marginalised by the established colonial system, through the communist group. She does not give up on her ideals and dreams, nor is she thoughtless in her fight; rather, she changes her tactics as the situation demands. She accepts the reality that the white colonial system in Rhodesia is so entrenched that it was going to take time for black people to organise themselves and fight it. She moves from the farm to the city in *Martha Quest*, moves out of the suburban house in *A Proper Marriage*, flees from colonial Zimbabwe and immigrates to Britain in *A Ripple from the Storm* and *The Four Gated City*, hoping to find a free environment in which to pursue her dreams.

3.3 Township domesticity in Vera's *Butterfly Burning*

Butterfly Burning is about generational conflict between the "lifebuoy men" and the "lux women" (to borrow Burke's terms), the first generation of emigrants represented by the mother figures of Getrude, Zandile and Deliwe, and the patriarch Fumbatha, and the second generation by the Sidojiwe E2 children born and raised in the township, particularly Phephelaphi. The conflict emanates from different dreams and ways of constituting modern subjectivity. Vera returns to the city to deal with the same issues Lessing dealt with: colonial domesticity, racial segregation, black marginalisation, and women's struggle for freedom. Vera's literary women seek to re-create their image, which has been misrepresented by white feminists who have a tendency to silence black women and create only symbols of their fecundity. Lessing offers us the questing rebellious white woman, and the iconic mysterious gestalt of unknowable black womanhood, presenting images of the black woman's "calm satisfied maternity" (*The Grass is Singing*), or the brooding woman with many children and a satisfied look (*A Proper Marriage*). Vera writes back to Lessing by re-creating African black womanhood fighting for freedom, giving voice and agency to black township women. Also, Vera's writing responds to what Boehmer describes as the silenced and wounded female figure in post-colonial discourse ("Transfiguring" 1993). She argues that post-colonial women, where I place Vera, radically rewrite this figuration of women in nationalist narratives by giving voice, agency and subjectivity to the marginalised post-colonial black woman (268-9). Vera's women also seek to re-create their image from the symbolic images of Nehanda constructed in male Zimbabwean nationalist narratives and nationalist patriotic history discussed in the last chapter. Like Lessing, she enters into the realm of taboo to re-create the image of a

questing rebellious modern black woman. I analyse the transfiguration of the questing woman, using the dirty trope, represented through skin bleaching and cleanliness, and the quest motif. I argue that second-generation postcolonial questing daughters rebel radically against domesticity and destroy the domestic home.

The story is set in the emerging modern colonial city of Bulawayo, during a period of rapid African modernisation in colonial Southern Rhodesia. In *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe*, Burke explains that colonial modernity created new desires and dreams for colonial subjects. Conceptualised as movement from the past to the future, modernity constitutes modern subjects that are "inherently restless", "railing against colonial containment and articulating its desire for an elsewhere" (Samuelson, "Yvonne Vera's Bulawayo" 22). The restless Makokoba township women embark on different quest journeys to "elsewhere" in search of a modern subjectivity. Black women in search of freedom and opportunities promised by modernity defy both colonial and traditional patriarchal control of their mobility by immigrating to the city (Schmidt, "Peasants" 1996). Vera uses the hygiene trope in the text to engage with how township women reinvent themselves. The "lux" and "*ambi* generation" (Vera, *Without a Name* 26) women are the most rebellious and taboo-breaking generation, and they are the generation which "purchases change" (Hemmings, "Altered Surfaces" 179). Zandile is "a pioneer advocate of a certain form of beauty", using *ambi* skin-bleaching cream. She is looked at by men with suspicion because she sells skin-lightening creams, offering the feeling of being desired (94). The lux and *ambi* generation are restless and in search of opportunities to indulge their intense desire to expand their horizons. Zandile feels that opportunity takes too long: "buried too far in the future. She has no shape of it she can retrieve and so she feels it more useful to search through the void" (39). This search causes restlessness as the women search for indefinable desire and they embark on quest journeys with no identifiable destination.

The *ambi* and lux generation are the women of economic independence who feature in the feminization of the city in Ranger's *Bulawayo Burning*. They are landlords, market women and entrepreneurs who contributed to the colonial economy. Even though *Bulawayo Burning* was written as a response to Vera's *Butterfly Burning,* it raises illuminating information on black women's role in the development of modernisation and black township culture. Vera sets her narrative in the 1940s, the same period used as an historical context for Lessing's white women's colonial domesticity, only Vera's attempt here is to involve black women's township domesticity as well. A township setting is evoked in Lessing's *A Proper Marriage,* and her short story, "Hunger," is also set in the 1940s, prefiguring the township settings in the novels of later generations. In her short story, Lessing initiates the aesthetics of giving voice and agency to black

women by creating the image of a new independent woman in control of her life, through Mrs Kambusi, the shebeen queen (Muchemwa, *Reimagining*). She is a fictional precursor of Deliwe, who also runs a vibrant shebeen business in defiance of state rules. Deliwe operates her forbidden business in her domestic living space, which becomes a transnational space where Zimbabwean migrant workers meet township men and women, a healing space where they listen to kwela music. The healing power of kwela music has been analysed by critics (Samuelson, "Yvonne Vera's Bulawayo", Lizzy Attree, "Language, kwela music"). The new independent urban township female dancers frequent shebeens, and dance boldly to kwela music, in free and erotic ways, in contrast to the innocent, submissive, meek girls from rural villages who have disappeared from the city (87, 91-3). The policemen call Deliwe a "wicked woman" because she shames them by sleeping naked, using her body as a weapon against police intrusion during late-night raids (62). Deliwe embodies resistance to the colonial authorities who imposed surveillance on the townships, and is not intimidated by them or the Johannesburg men. Her assertiveness and independence are also hated by many black men, for example Fumbatha, as he dislikes her way of making young men forget their troubles, and because "She was the sort of woman to make a man crawl….She liked to see a man fall on his knees" (64).

The black township women defy colonial authority and indigenous patriarchy by establishing homes for themselves in the city. Zandile builds her "own solid shelter" (129) in Makokoba and, tired of looking at unknown faces in the morning, she chooses a man to live with her in her house, on her own terms (41-2). Zandile and Boyidi live in *mapoto* relationships (not legalised by marriage or Christian wedding). Their unconventional coupling deprives the traditional patriarchy of *lobola* (bride price), and destabilises the European Christian nuclear family structure of husband and wife established through a legalised white church wedding, followed by having children. The text concludes that forming new liaisons with men outside the patriarchal conventions of marriage destabilises the institution of marriage established by colonial patriarchy in complicity with tradition.

Motherhood is the central tenet of African feminism (Nfah-Abbenyi 1997, Mikell 1997, Nnaemeka 1997; 1998, Arndt 2002, Ogundipe-Leslie 1994, Ocholonlu 1995). Motherhood is a cherished, desired and preferred self-identity for many literary African women and their creators, as reflected in Molara Ogundipe Leslie's ironic statement in the first epigraph. In African societies and nationalist struggles motherhood has been put on a pedestal and revered for different political purposes (Samuelson 2007, Cazenave 1996). Musila states that "underpinning this reverence for motherhood is a naturalization of maternal instincts and mothering as an inherently female calling" and : "This naturalization of mothering makes it taboo for women to have a non-receptive response to motherhood, as maternity is taken to be an automatic female instinct,

codified in the capacity to conceive" ("Embodying" 55). Women like Zandile are tabooed and stereotyped for lacking a maternal instinct. Zandile is the biological mother of Phephelaphi, and nearly abandons her after giving birth on a rubbish heap, but instead gives up the child to her friend Getrude, who volunteers to look after her. Zandile sees motherhood as a burden (143-4). She rejects motherhood as an identity, but chooses freedom and pleasure, and wants to be remembered "for her poise, her voice and liberty" (38). Her radical and subversive choices and actions foreshadow her biological daughter's radical rejection of motherhood in favour of a professional career.

Butterfly Burning unveils and inscribes new constructions of motherhood as a form of identity. The text deconstructs "nuclear motherhood" (to borrow Oyewumi's concept), imported from the metropolis and circulated by colonial and post-colonial patriarchy. In a different context, Oyewumi explains that in "nuclear motherhood", theorised in Euro-American feminism by theorists such as Chodorow (1978), "there is no independent meaning of motherhood outside the mother's primary and sexualised identity as the patriarch's wife" ("Family Bonds/Conceptual Binds" 1097). Getrude's motherhood identity is not a sexualised identity, and it is "not constructed in tandem with fatherhood" or based on "nuclear motherhood" (Oyewumi 1097). Getrude becomes the foster mother of Phephelaphi, embracing single-mother identity. She informally adopts the child, circumventing the patriarchal bureaucracy on adoption. She also evades Zimbabwean bloodline patriarchal kinship structures and politics, which make it taboo to adopt a child one is not related to by blood or with a different totem.[24] Also, Getrude's single-motherhood family model is portrayed as an alternative model for barren women or women who do not want to procreate, but desire motherhood identity. Rather than continuing to construct the patriarchal nuclear family (comprising husband, wife and children), the text argues for alternative constructions of motherhood that are woman-defined. The text offers a feminist intervention model for adoption, of motherhood and of family.

The first-generation women's rebellion is successful and they manage to re-create their images and achieve self-defined subjectivity. However, while prostitution brings sexual freedom, it still falls within the patriarchal structure in being available to provide sexual pleasure to men, and prostitutes perform the maternal role for their black male clients, cleaning wounds inflicted by the colonial police and providing emotional support. These unsanctioned *mapoto* heterosexual relationships are radical, in that they deny patriarchy *lobola* (bride price), thus preventing women from being commodities and objects of male exchange, but still falling within the patriarchal family structure. Also, foster mothering is a very radical action in a culture that values bloodline

[24] Vivienne Ndlovu's *For Want of a Totem* portrays how the Zimbabwean bloodline kinship system and totem relations affect the adoption of children in a country with many orphaned HIV children (1997).

kinship, but the women still do occupy a mothering role. However, the self-assured independent township women are not oppressed by men and they subvert male power and authority. Despite their lack of Western education, they point to possibilities of being a black woman outside colonial and traditional patriarchal constraints. They inspire the second-generation daughter, Phephelaphi, to seek a self-defined female subjectivity, giving her struggle for freedom and autonomy a "female genealogy" (to borrow Gagiano's concept 154).

Phephelaphi belongs to the second generation, which has unbounded imagination and creativity. The Makokoba, Sidojiwe E2 children improvise toys from scraps of discarded objects of modernity and "weave endless talk of imagined places" (17-19). Their contact with affluent objects materialises as "a desire to cross boundaries, an attempt to 'triumph' [over] an unconscious claustrophobia, an instinctive quest for beauty, a mimicry, based on a vague knowledge of the material environment of other people – affluent people" (Paci, "The Representation" 334). Modernity evokes Phephelaphi's burning desire, described as an urge, a craving and a hunger for something new (75, 76, and 79). "It made her breathless just to imagine being anything else other than what she was," although "It was nothing she knew...she wanted it" (107). "She wants a birth of her own.… Finding her… as it were. She did not know what this entailed" (80). She passionately embarks on a quest, looking for "an opportunity to be a different woman," to "be something with an outline, and even though she was not sure what she meant, she wanted some respect, some dignity, some balance and power of her own. Finding herself" (107).

Phephelaphi is aware that the only scripts which colonial patriarchy, acting complicity with traditional patriarchy, has shaped for women are domesticity and prostitution. She observes that town houses are "built mostly for bachelors, the women were not expected to follow their men into the city. But, the men smuggled women into these tiny shelters," in search of sexual comfort (102). The quotation suggests that the men brought women into their tiny shelters to perform the domestic roles of providing comfort and sexual pleasure, thus reaffirming the black man's masculinity which had been deflated by white settler patriarchy. The authorial voice comments, "The women had other ideas about their own fulfilment….They craved something possessing the hint of rivers or an expanse as wide and fascinating as the sea" (103). The women's dreams were beyond the tiny township domestic shelters provided by men like Fumbatha. Fumbatha's shack is one-roomed, built with cement, bricks and asbestos, roofed with a small square window facing the main road of Sidojiwe E2 (47-8). It has thin walls with gaps and no privacy. Fumbatha inserts wedges of crumbled old cloth to close gaps in the thin walls. Like Lessing's Mary in *The Grass is Singing* and Martha Quest in *A Proper Marriage*, Phephelaphi initially accepts the domestic space as her rightful place. Phephelaphi and Fumbatha put pictures on the walls to decorate their room together, signifying their commitment to each other and their home (84). Vera un-roofs the

domestic shack, exposing the private possessions: a paraffin stove, a broken bed, two old suitcases, metal plates, a wire partitioning the room where cloths and sliced meat, dripping blood and smelling, are all placed (48). Nauseating and revolting effects are materialised by the squalor and suffocating atmosphere that pervade it. It is not safe, as public violence from the street penetrates it, and a stone thrown by men fighting in the street breaks the window near the bed where Phephelaphi is sleeping, falling near her head. The text appears to plead for an understanding of why township women reject domesticity, and foreshadows Phephelaphi's inevitable discontent with township domesticity.

Phephelaphi has an uncompromisingly defiant and rebellious attitude to colonial marginalisation and traditional patriarchy. Her mind is "fully formed and free as a butterfly" (Primorac 39), as portrayed by her conscious decision to go to the shebeen and investigate the vibrant township life around her. She feels "a sense of wholeness in making a decision without [Fumbatha]", "thrilled to be walking in the night on her own to Deliwe's house", wearing a white skirt that is tight at the waist like a butterfly (64). She wants to listen to the kwela music that Fumbatha's "protection" has denied her. Kwela music heals the pain of her mother's death. At the same time the conversations with men from Johannesburg make her realise that she does not want her identity to be defined by a man, she wants to be economically independent and learn how to love herself the same way as her mother Getrude loved herself and was in control of her body. She remembers the game of touching the ear they played, and how her mother could do it. This inspires her to learn how to love herself, and love a man simply because she can and because he makes something in her "heart beat" and "her knees weak with the flow of tender caresses" (80). She learns how to take control of her own body from Getrude, and this desire to take control of her own body foreshadows Phephelaphi's self-abortion and suicide.

The mother-daughter relationship is not a new theme in English Zimbabwean women-authored novels. In Maraire's *Zenzele: A Letter for My Daughter*, Zenzele looks up to her mother as a model for African femininity, but rejects her because she fails to challenge patriarchal social and cultural hierarchies, accepting the passive feminine roles assigned to her by patriarchy. So, the daughter charts her own future. Unlike Lessing's mothers and Maraire's mother, who fail to challenge patriarchy, Vera's novels make a significant shift by producing mothers who rebel against colonial and traditional patriarchy, laying the foundations of rebellion for their daughters: the mother figures in *Butterfly Burning*, Mazvita's mother in *Without a Name* and Thenjiwe and Noceba's mother and their aunt in *The Stone Virgins*. The mother plays a significant role in the constitution of the daughter's subjectivity, and the chain of mothers is involved in prostitution in different ways. Schmidt explains that even though unauthorised female migrants posed a direct challenge to the colonial order that excluded them from the city, and undermined the traditional

patriarchy that formed an alliance with colonial patriarchy to restrict women's mobility in the city, the only jobs available to women were as baby-minders in the white suburbs, illegal beer brewing and prostitution (Schmidt 80).

Phephelaphi rejects the alternative of being a prostitute, as she rejects sexuality as an expression of freedom or an alternative to domesticity. Her rejection is signified by the burning of Getrude's beautiful pale green erotic "work" dress (76-8, 129) which symbolises female sexuality. Shaw states that Getrude and Zandile directly expose their daughter, Phephelaphi, to their sexuality ("Turning Her Back" 8). Phephelaphi realises the role her foster mother Getrude played as a prostitute, and why she embodied that role, and she forgives her on "knowing how difficult it is to be a woman, to fly with a broken limb" (67). After getrude's death, she lives briefly with her biological mother, Zandile, witnessing her sexuality with Boyidi: "What are you going to do in Makokoba without being a man? Do you know that a woman only has a moment in which to live her whole life? In it she must choose what belongs to her and what does not....Makokoba is unkind to women like you who pretend to be butterflies that can land on any blossom they choose" (129). Phephelaphi is not perturbed, and she rejects Getrude and Zandile as models of modern African femininity. However, she is charmed by the mother figure Deliwe's independence and freedom, and she chooses her as her mentor and aspirational model (62). The "imitations of exhilarating freedoms" by the dancers at the shebeen fascinate her and inspire her to seek her own freedom (Hunter 236). Deliwe and the dancers conscientise Phephelaphi into another way of being an African woman, and make her believe "that she [can be] a butterfly that can land on any blossom [it] choose[s]" (129).

Phephelaphi's desire is to re-create her identity, and to erase the identity of both the prostitute's daughter and Fumbatha's girlfriend. Her desire takes form when she is finally able to articulate it, "I want to become a nurse at the hospital," she says, "I am sending my application" (70). Like Lessing's Martha Quest, Phephelaphi desires to re-create her identity through having a profession. But, unlike Martha who is a white privileged woman who can find a job and go to college and train as a secretary, Phephelaphi is at the margins of racialized, segregated and gendered colonial Zimbabwe. The ambiguities of colonial civilisation are that it offers promises and raises hope, but does not deliver (Gikandi, "Cultural Translation"). White settler economy precludes black women for a longtime from having any career. But Phephelaphi is a politically conscious person, and is constantly questioning her surroundings. She asks why black men may not drive trains, and also argues that "If we don't apply, will anyone know that we are interested" (71). Phephelaphi's, "idea of progress includes the United School. What comes after that is now the nursing school" (71). Progress entails "movement forward – entrance into something new and untried" (71). She naively thinks Fumbatha will support her dream, but he forbids it. However, Phephelaphi is "a

woman who chose her own destination and liked to watch the horizon change from pale morning to blue light" (63). She does not bow down at Fumbatha's command, nor is she deterred by the colonial economy that excludes most black people from professional jobs. In defiance of racism, patriarchally defined domesticity and confining love, she secretly applies for the job. Her action is a very subversive action and a bold political statement that challenges the racist and sexist patriarchal society. The unsettled township woman's desire is crystallised by Phephelaphi as a desire for a career and economic independence.

Phephelaphi's quest to be a different woman creates conflict with her boyfriend, emanating from "colliding dreams" (Gagiano, "Buried Hurts" 40). He belongs to the first generation and he is much older than his girlfriend. He fears losing her and senses that she "needs more" than their domestic life. He desires to keep Phephelaphi still (25), and "wants to love her without risk" (71). He does not support her career aspirations, and forbids her to apply to study. "We are happy together. I work. I take care of you. It is not necessary for you to find something else." (70). "We have our life together." (71). He treasures Phephelaphi, and wants her to belong, to feel content with the life he is providing (70). He guards her like a hawk (63). He insists on her "unwavering loyalty" (70). He is a traditional man who believes a woman's place is in the domestic space and her main role is to have children, while he provides for her. Fumbatha is an adoring, possessive, obsessive, controlling, demanding and insecure boyfriend. Traditional patriarchy invokes loyalty to imprison and contain black women.

As with Martha in *A Proper Marriage*, the reproductive body crushes Phephelaphi's dream when she discovers that she is pregnant two weeks after receiving the acceptance letter enabling her to train for nursing. Colonial patriarchy uses what Kristeva calls "women's time" (Jardine and Blake 1981), in this case the biological reproductive cycle, to exclude women from the public sphere. She cannot be accepted if she is pregnant, and pregnancy becomes a stumbling block to social mobility. With that door closing, Phephelaphi is plunged into an emotional crisis. She has chosen to reclaim her body and pursue her quest for self-advancement through a professional career within a settler economy, so she decides to terminate the pregnancy rather than succumb to colonial and traditional patriarchal marginalization. The text argues for an appreciation of the ambiguous position that post-colonial black women find themselves in, when patriarchal nationalist governments which idealise motherhood deny them access to family-planning methods. The text argues for and advocates that black women's reproductive rights be respected.

Phephelaphi's radical rebellion against patriarchally defined femininity is depicted in her audacious violation of the abortion taboo. In a different context, in *The Radical Aesthetic,* Armstrong argues that radical aesthetics have democratic potential. She proposes a retrieval of the

radical creativity of second-wave French feminists like Kristeva, who experimented with language and developed a strong feminist aesthetic which fused "affect and thought" (30). Armstrong asserts that we need to

> [R]etheorize a flagrantly emancipatory, unapologetically radical aesthetic. This would refuse the conservative reading of the aesthetic as that which stands over and against the political as disinterested Beauty, called in nevertheless to assuage the violence of a system it leaves untouched, and retrieve the radical traditions and possibilities with which the idea of the aesthetic has always been associated. I would regard with dismay a politics which subtracts the aesthetic and refuses it cultural meaning and possibility (30).

I argue that *Butterfly Burning* creates a radical taboo aesthetic that gives women agency. In the context of this thesis, taboo aesthetics refer to the use of beautiful, poetic language that transforms painful, unsayable, disastrous, horrific, patriarchal domestic taboos into aesthetic beauty that evokes affects of admiration, sympathy, respect and awe, thus reshaping perceptions, cognition and thought about women and patriarchal domestic taboos. In an interview Vera says, "I am interested in Zimbabweans reading my work and maybe transforming their understanding of some of the taboos ….This is a way of mediating between people who are unable to speak, like women, and people who should be listening" (Hunter, "Shaping the Truth" 82). Vera's pronouncement on the role of the writer as mediator raises theoretical and ideological questions which are not the focus of this section. But I am interested in how Vera seeks to transform the understanding of abortion taboo and suicide, using poetic discourse. The abortion scene and the suicide scene shape a radical taboo aesthetic.

Using poetic discourse, *Butterfly Burning* takes the reader through a whole chapter describing Phephelaphi's arduous self-inflicted abortion which takes a whole day. The term "poetic language" is from Julia Kristeva's theory of "poetic language" which insists on the capacity of language to disrupt the existing unities of hegemonic discourse and inflict "productive violence" (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 16). In the abortion scene Vera practices deconstructive writing, what Lizzy Attree calls "defamiliarization":

> Push. She has pushed it in. Sharp and piercing. No fear. No excitement. This must be. In and out of a watery sac. Slowly she receives it as though this motion will provide an ecstatic release. Her hand is steady inside her body. Her own hand inserting an irreversible harm…. Her hand moves and beats in rapid motions (115).

This quotation takes one through Phephelaphi's emotions and sensations during the abortion. Her will, conscious thoughts and affective feelings are depicted in the short poetic rhythmic phrases, while force is depicted in the symbolic ecstatic release.

Defamiliarisation is achieved by using beautiful language which "both balances and offsets the severity, gravity and pain of its content; yet it does not distract or detract from the subject but enhances it" (Attree, "Language" 64). The semiotic and the symbolic order are parallel in the abortion scene. I employ Kristeva's understanding of the semiotic "unconscious, instinctual, bodily impulses which precede syntactic language" (Rabine, "Women's Time" 45). The semiotic includes the affects of pre-symbolic impulses which come into language as "rhythms, intonations" (Rabine, "Women's Time" 45). One goes through every detail of feeling and experience as Phephelaphi plucks a long thorn from the sturdy dry tree, squats in the dry sand near a river and pushes her hand into her body, piercing the amniotic sac carrying the baby with a thorn, going through the intense waves of pain with her until the amniotic fluid and blood wash down her hand and soak into the sand (113-131). One focuses on the artistic movement of the hand, not the horrific violent act being committed by those hands: "She thinks of something else altogether while the child pulls away from her and finds the sky so low it grazes her knees which are weak and folding….Beautiful red blooms embrace, once more, the bush. Indeed, she can smell the pollen and see the bees" (119). In the quotation the fusion of thought and affects of sight, smell, and feeling create a beautiful aesthetic image of the painful separation of the mother and foetus. The moment of shock is deferred by the aesthetic images of beauty. As the foetus comes out she feels as "though she is a transparent membrane coating the inside shell of an egg" (120). She has broken the shell and emerged a new person. The "poetic style allows for the ethical acknowledgement of the subaltern suffering" (Sofia Kostelac, "The Voices" 121). Read this way, the abortion evokes feelings of awe and respect: the protagonist is a hero because she has endured the painful process with dignity and grace.

The abortion chapter "emphasizes the cost to a woman of daring to 'break', 'crack' open the 'shell'" of defined social identity (Hunter, "Zimbabwe Nationalism" 238). Phephelaphi's rejection of motherhood "cast a terrible shadow into her being, split mind into irreconcilable parts, breaks her memory into fragments" (128). Unlike her biological mother Zandile, who gives up her child without looking back, or Martha Quest who walks out on her husband and child and never looks back, Phephelaphi is haunted by a guilty conscience that makes her confide in Zandile. But Zandile does not support the abortion nor does she sympathise with her, and she betrays her trust by telling Fumbatha. Fumbatha is very angry and resents Phephelaphi when Deliwe tells him about the secret abortion. She is devastated when Fumbatha rejects her. Fumbatha's love and admiration filled her with hope larger than memory (32). "She loved him because he said everything about love" and she relied on his respect (33).

In the awful confrontation scene, Fumbatha says, "You killed our child?" He does not even give her time to explain. "Now you have killed my child without telling me about it? Where did you

bury my child?" (141). Fumbatha has the patriarchal masculine view that women are the containers of their progeny. He does not even think about giving her a chance to explain why she did it. Seeking revenge, he accuses Phephelaphi of being a prostitute like her mother. He cruelly reveals the unknown circumstances of her birth – that Zandile is her biological mother. He tells her how Getrude was killed by a white policeman who was her client after he found her talking to another man at the door at midnight. He tells her she is nothing, rejecting her and finally destroying their relationship (140). Phephelaphi is so traumatised by Fumbatha's words that she "lay still with her teeth chattering because every word pierced her like a spear" during the argument (142). She wet herself (144), and felt that he "shattered her entire core and she became nothing" (142).

Vera uses a first-person narrative perspective to enable Phephelaphi to process and formulate her thoughts, feelings and rejection. She discovers that she is pregnant again after the confrontation. She knows she will not be able to train as a nurse, and wonders "What else am I to become but nothing?" (145). She goes on to say, "No matter my being, no matter which, I will not" (145). She keeps on emphasizing that: "and I will not. Will not" (145). She refuses to live a life trapped in numerous layers of containment. Traditional patriarchy insists on loyalty: Fumbatha wants her to be a mother to his children, to depend on him economically and not have any career. Colonial patriarchy with its gender and race-discriminatory urban economy marginalizes her, and she feels that without achieving her quest for a career she does not belong, she has no identity. She also refuses to live a life trapped by her biology: "An obstacle whichever direction her mind opens" (128). She transcends all her barriers by setting herself alight: "The fire moves over her light as a feather, smooth like oil. She has wings. She can fly. She turns her arms over and sees them burning and raises them higher above her head, easily, tossing and turning her arms up like a burning rope. She is a bird with wings spread" (150). Whilst this is a horrific scene, the beautiful transcendental language of "feather" "fly" and "a bird with wings spread" defamiliarize suicide, giving it agency. She manages "to love her own body" and provides herself with her own refuge in her fiery death. The domestic house is (un)homely, death is a refuge. But, it is a momentary triumph as her wings fold, as she lets go of her breath, and the flying bird falls to pieces (151). A beautiful spectacle of great horror described in beautiful transcendental language. Hunter says: the aesthetic power of the passages in which women kill (in Vera's novels)

> raises a disturbing question: is Vera shaping an aesthetic of violence, as do many Hollywood films, such as those of Quentin Tarantino?….Phephelaphi's self-abortion and self-immolation in *Butterfly Burning*, which are described in passages that are replete with both repetition (that suggests ritual and profundity) and with images that evoke transcendence (flying, wings, purification), may be read as an achieved act of protest and self-assertion (105) .

The suicide foregrounds a radical taboo aesthetic that attracts respect and awe for Phephelaphi, not condemnation or flinching from the reader. While suicide is taboo in African societies, for example Zimbabwean traditional and religious culture, the text gives death agency. "A touch, her own genuine touch; to love her own body now, after he has loved and left it, to love her own eyebrows and her own knees, finally she has done so, embracing each part of herself with flame, deeply and specially" (150). It is a suicidal act of "defiance of patriarchal and colonial law" (Nwakanma 42). The taboo discursive space enables Vera to create new language to allow marginalised women to articulate the unspeakable, to speak out, to explore uncharted territories, and silenced narratives of the nation, nationhood and citizenship (Gagiano 45). Vera experiments with poetic language and prose and develops a strong feminist taboo aesthetic that destabilises patriarchal discourse.

3.4 Conclusion

The quest motif and the house trope interweave the two sections. But the quest is spatially conceived differently in Lessing's and Vera's texts because of the colonial dynamics and racial differences. There are huge differences among individual women, between white and black "colonial" women in the kinds of struggles they fight and the strategies they use. The writers too, and their fictional heroines, find themselves in spaces of transition, with both Lessing and Vera narrating postcolonial transitional moments. Lessing herself appropriates a male bildungsroman, gendering it, and Martha is constantly making transitions and mapping a complicated path of flight. She shifts across different kinds of borders – geographical, ideological and generic. In Lessing's fiction the quest motif is accentuated by travel away from limiting colonial spaces. She is a white privileged middle-class woman who has some rights in colonial Zimbabwe, and her horizon is enlarged by self-education and books. In *The Grass is Singing*, Mary goes to the city and finds a job, in *Martha Quest*, Martha goes to the city and finds a job, in *A Proper Marriage*, Martha divorces her husband, abandons her child and leaves the matrimonial suburban house. She rents a flat, actively works with a communist group and achieves a sense of self-fulfilment. In *A Ripple from the Storm* and *The Four-Gated City* she escapes from the stifling racist Southern Rhodesian society and immigrates to the motherland, Britain, in search of freedom and a self-fulfilling life.

In Vera's fiction the quest motif is conceived spatially in circles, and there is no easy way forward for Phephelaphi. She is a marginalised black township woman. Her quest is within the colonial economic system, yet the colonial economy is exclusionary in terms of gender and race, and when an opportunity opnes up, pregnancy disqualifies women. Her quest and escape route have been formed by the formal colonial education which has instilled values of modernity and progress

within modernist ideology. *Butterfly Burning* represents the ruthlessness and vindictiveness of the oppositional nationalist and postcolonial patriarchy that has a vicious grip on power and has constructed fortified walls to entrap and imprison women, closing doors for negotiation but insisting on women's loyalty and patriotism. The vice-like grip on women provokes black women's feminist rage such as portrayed through the radical rebellion of burning down the domestic house and nation. Even so, Phephelaphi achieves momentary triumph, as the text celebrates her sense of self-fulfilment and ability to take charge of her body. She transcends all barriers albeit through her suicide and becomes a quest heroine.

Chapter 4: UDI and the Second Chimurenga: Men and women in the struggle and in the home

> And of course, the gender problem is always second to the national question. Therefore, I think, it hasn't received proper attention or the right kind of analysis. (Dangarembga 347)[25]

4.1 Introduction

Women have been represented as symbols of the nation in nationalist projects which submerge the myriad of roles they performed in the second liberation struggles.[26] The short story of former freedom fighter, Nyamubaya's "That Special Place" (2003), revisits the war to contest the "patriarchal mode of nationalist history, expressed as *amadoda sibili*/*varume chaivo* (real men)" (Itai Muwati et al. 173), which silences and marginalizes women's sacrifices, suffering and bravery during the liberation struggle. Nehanda's prophecy that her bones would rise again to fight colonialism became an inspiration for the second *chimurenga*, but her woman-warrior status did not translate into women's equality with men in the liberation struggle, nor to conferment of heroic status to female guerrillas (Lyons 2004, Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000). In *Nervous Conditions* (1988) Dangarembga shifts the focus from the second *chimurenga* to the home front, while *chimurenga* also forms the background to the plot. I will examine father-daughter relations on the home front, paying close attention to the daughter's contestation of the father's absolute power and authority. This chapter of my thesis argues that the texts return to the scene of the liberation war in order to contest male heroism, reclaim women's agency, re-write women's roles, and re-inscribe female heroes in the nation, while re-evaluating the masculinities and femininities that emerged during the second *chimurenga*. The chapter asserts that there is a nexus between home front, rear-bases and frontline, conceptualized around the gender struggle between political-military leaders and guerrillas on the one hand, and guerrillas and civilians on the other.

The chapter is framed around two sections. The first is the home front as a war, and the second section focuses on the rear in Nyamubaya's short story "That Special Place." Dangarembga's debut novel won the 1989 Commonwealth Prize. *Nervous Condition* is ground-breaking because it is the first novel written in English by a black woman in Zimbabwe in a male-dominated literary arena. Dangarembga was born in 1959 in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), stayed for four years in Britain with her parents who were studying, came back and attended school in Zimbabwe. She went back to study for a medical degree at Cambridge University in 1977, and

[25] In an interview with Kirsten Petersen, "Between Gender, Race and History: Kirsten Petersen Interviews Tsitsi Dangarembga" *Kunapipi.* 16.1 (1994) 344- 48.
[26] Samuelson 2007, Tanya Lyons 2004, Nira Yuval Davies 1998.

deregistered because she could not stand the racism. She returned to Zimbabwe a few months before Zimbabwe's independence. She then studied psychology at the University of Zimbabwe, where she wrote plays and participated in a drama group. *Nervous Conditions* is framed by the radical statement of the protagonist, Tambudzai (Tambu for short): "I was not sorry when my brother died" (1). Tambu reveals that the Sigauke women – Tambu's mother, Maiguru, Nyasha, Lucia and Tambu herself – are all involved in the struggle against patriarchy in one way or another. The Sigauke patriarchy comprises the hegemonic masculine, all-powerful, authoritarian and benevolent Babamukuru, his younger brother, Jeremiah brothers' sons, Nhamo and Chido. On the Sigauke home front, father-and-daughter conflicts emanate from the daughter's quest to re-create her image. Tambu rejects hetero-normative assumptions, choosing rather to redefine herself as a good intellectual daughter, thereby declaring war against patriarchy, and converting the home space into a metaphorical war zone, aided by Nyasha, who also rejects Babamukuru's absolute power and authority over her. This chapter analyses the representations of the home front and examines whether or how the home is portrayed as itself a war zone within the larger national conflict.

Women who have been in the actual war zone represent how "women's bodies are simultaneously saturated with and stripped of meaning" (Samuelson, "The Disfigured Body" 833). In the aftermath, the disfigured body of the female guerrilla is further silenced by male nationalists, who create only male heroes in their quest for legitimacy and creation of national identity (Kriger, *The Politics of Creating National Heroes*). Women who have been to war are contesting men's self-proclaimed heroic status by exposing the abuse and violence done to women combatants. In "Contesting 'Patriotic History': Zimbabwe's Liberation War History and the Democratization Agenda", Muwati et al. argue that *Women of Resilience: The Voices of Women Ex-Combatants* (2000), published by Zimbabwe Women Writers, provides an alternative perspective on liberation war history that debunks "patriotic history" (171). The *Women of Resilience* anthology records the experiences of eight female ex-combatants and one *chimbwido* (woman recruited to do errands for guerrillas during Zimbabwe's war) (171). Nyamubaya adds her voice by writing poems and short stories focusing on the war and its aftermath. She has published two anthologies, one consisting of poems (*On the Road Again* 1986), and the other consisting of poems and short stories (*Dusk of Dawn* 1995). The main themes of the poems and short stories are women's experiences of the war in the front line and the rear. Nyamubaya's autobiographical short story, "That Special Place" (2003), revisits the liberation war in the 1970s, twenty three years later, attempting to make sense of postcolonial Zimbabwe. She narrates her torture and rape as a new recruit by the security commander in the rear. Nyamubaya dedicated her life to the freedom of Zimbabwe by actively participating in the liberation struggle and continued to fight for ordinary people's rights for freedom and justice as a poet and activist until she passed away on 5 July 2015.

Adichie comments that her writing about the Nigerian-Biafra war "engage[s] with [her] history in order to make sense of [her] present, because many of the issues that led to the war remain unresolved in Nigeria today" (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 2). Zimbabwean women writers similarly revisit the horror of the war zone in order to "ask how it was possible", and narrating the war more than a decade after independence allows the writers to be "removed enough from it to depict it with all its shock and trauma" and not suppress war history (Vera in an interview with Bryce, 225-226). Dangarembga says she engages with the war because it "…inform[s] present practices and ways of seeing....[I]t has implications for how we are today...and the problems that Zimbabwe is experiencing today" (Rooney, "Interview"57-58). Thus, "[t]he liberation war is broadened out to become also a symbolical battlefield within which both social confrontations in the aftermath of the war and more general existential conflicts are fought out" (Kaarsholm, "Siye Pambili", 11). Vera retrospectively represents ordinary women's lived experience of the liberation war in her novels. In *Without a Name* (1994) Mazvita is raped by a freedom fighter and in *Under the Tongue* (1996) a daughter is raped by her father because he is frustrated by his failure to go and fight in the war. In *The Stone Virgins* (2002) despite the fact that demobilized female ex-combatants return from the war dressed like male guerrillas, Thenjiwe is murdered, while her sister Nonceba is mutilated by a ZIPRA ex-combatant who became a dissident soon after Independence. Dangarembga aesthetically recreates the war in some sections of *The Book of Not*, focusing on the violence inflicted by freedom fighters on women and children, while ordinary people were also victims of violence at the hands of Rhodesian soldiers.

Nationalist tradition celebrates the romanticized male hero, the heroic act of fighting at the front line in direct combat, and the necessity of violence in war, as legitimated in the Fanonian sense, as a healing force against dehumanization and mental colonization (*The Wretched* 2004). Kaarsholm states that the "main concern in all of [these nationalist war narratives] was to provide models for understanding or legitimation of wartime violence" ("Siye Pambili" 5). War is celebrated in Edmund Chipamaunga's *A Fighter for Freedom* (1983), where Tinashe, the heroic son, joins ZANLA guerrillas, and helps defeat colonialism and in Mutasa's *The Contact* (1985), where violence is a cleansing force against foreign ideology and freedom. The former guerrilla, Mazorodze's *Silent Journey from the East* (1989), commemorates guerrilla war, attributing violence against civilians to personal psychological and emotional problems. Critical war narratives explore the legitimacy of guerilla fighters, focusing on the brutality of war on civilians, and the tragedy and trauma of war, for example Nyamufukudza's *The Non-Believer's Journey* (1980), Sigogo's *Ngenziwa Ngumuno Welizwe* (1986),[27] McLoughlin's *Karima* (1985) and

[27] Ndebele for "I was influenced by the political situation".

Hove's *Bones* (1988). Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) depicts feelings of betrayal and disillusionment. Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* portrays the images of gruesome scenes of violence at *pungwe*, [all-night vigils with guerrilla fighters to conscientise the masses to support the war] against civilians by guerrillas (208). The former freedom fighter Kanengoni's *Vicious Circle* (1983) focuses on the torture of civilians by Rhodesian authorities, while his *Echoing Silences* (1997) portrays the murder of innocent women and children by guerrillas.

This chapter focuses on women writing the war and the two fronts they engage with, as they negotiate, redefine and re-create the hero/heroine image. I analyze the representation of the home front as a war zone, focusing on women at war with men in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. The discussion will then move to men and women in and at war in Nyamubaya's short story "That Special Place," to analyze women and men's lived experiences of the liberation war.

4.2 The home front as a war zone

The texts under study depict that even though both men and women endure colonial domination, women are also subjugated by African men. While men and women confronted the colonial settler in the bush, fighting to dismantle colonialism during the second *chimurenga*, in *Nervous Conditions* women were also caught up in the struggle against both colonialism and indigenous patriarchy on the home front. Dangarembga frames *Nervous Conditions* around the social institution of the African family, the nerve center of heteronormativity.[28] The story is about two generations of women (mother and daughter) and two generations of men (father and son). Men have power and authority in the domestic space, and women's concerns and views are not respected. Preferential treatment of the male child in the Sigauke patriarchal family creates conflict on the home front. The Sigauke patriarchal agenda is determined by Jeremiah, who is Tambu's father, and Babamukuru who is the uncle and benefactor, and who is to groom Tambu's brother Nhamo to be the saviour of Jeremiah's family and the family hero while the female child, Tambu, is groomed to be a marriageable woman, wife and mother. Tambu rejects these hetero-normative assumptions, rather choosing to re-create her self-image as a good daughter and then a critical intellectual, thereby converting the home into a metaphorical war zone for gender equality. I argue that Tambu's feminist consciousness materializes in, and is shaped by, the battles between men and women in the metaphorical home front war zone.

[28] Heteronormativity as a concept refers to the patriarchal ideology that views heterosexuality as the legitimate and normal socio-sexual arrangement of society (Hannesy, Rosemary and Ingraham Chrys. *Materialist Feminism: A Reader in Class, Difference and Women's Lives*. New York and London: Routledge).

Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* is in conversation with a very masculine Zimbabwean literary archive, but also with a larger African literary archive. The work of Zimbabwean male writers of Dangarembga's generation, such as Hove's *Bones* (1988) which is not very masculine but casts Marita, a female character, as a "mother of the nation", and Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* (1989). They directly represent the second *chimurenga* through gendered lenses. Marita, the heroine of *Bones*, is represented as the mother figure of the nation. By contrast, in *Nervous Conditions*, the liberation war forms the backdrop to women's struggle against both colonial and indigenous patriarchy. However, it is not simply in opposition to the male canon. Dangarembga acknowledges being influenced by Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's writing in "discovering that we can actually talk about the things that are going on" (Caroline Rooney, "Interview" 60). There is a dialogic relationship between Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between*, cross-referenced in Dangarembga's intertextual re-appropriation of what had hitherto been a masculinized literary encounter with colonial education, replacing the male literary-intellectual lineage of Ngugi's novel about Chege and Waiyaki with Dangarembga's alternative of Grandmother and Tambu. Grandmother is like Ngugi's Chege, who sends his son Waiyaki to be exposed to colonial education so that he can beat the colonizer with his own weapons. Waiyaki, the son of the Ridges, is groomed through education to lead his people in the fight against colonialism, but he fails to relate to his tradition and sees education as the only source of liberation. Then one can read Dangarembga's novel as an intertextual conversation and inversion of Ngugi's novel, i.e. the resurrection of Waiyaki through Tambu, arming her with seemingly better strategies of surviving the intersecting colonial and traditional patriarchies. Dangarembga re-creates gender in the context of a larger African literary archive by revisiting what people have done with the confluence between modernity/colonial education and "classic-tradition" (Chennells 62), now rendered archaic by colonialism.

Feminist theorists argue that the domestic space is a gendered and politicized entity where the male dominates the female subject (Rose 1993, Massey 1994, Mills 2005, 1996). Dangarembga challenges the Victorian ideals of the public and private divide, and destabilizes the notion that the domestic space is "a haven of tranquility and love" (Rose, 18), rather portraying the home as a metaphorical war zone in which the gender war is waged. The home is a gendered social space that activates war because of "tensions and contradictions [which] are continually spawned by the interface between those elements de Certeau refers to as quotidian practices: speaking, reading, movement, shopping, cooking etc." (Adesanmi, "Anti-Manichean Aesthetics" 73). In the context of *Nervous Conditions* and the Zimbabwe it represents, tensions are created by the colonial and traditional values that govern where and how they are practised.

Dangarembga confronts the family as a crucial site of social transformation, mapping the home front as the primary site for gender struggle. Hegemonic strands of African feminism do not "subscribe to a monolithic and exclusive empowerment of women, but a multilateral growth that incorporates the woman, her family and male relations. Equal partnership and mutual support contribute to a successful relationship" (Okafor, "Rewriting popular myths" 89). The family is presented as a supportive social unity, in contrast to the Sigauke family, where the men— Babamukuru, Jeremiah and his son Nhamo— make his sisters carry bags for him from the bus stop even though they are not heavy, representing it as hierarchical, patriarchal, and intermittently violent towards women and children. Their attitudes are characterized by the belief that gender differences justify differential treatment in terms of education, opportunities, freedom of association and mobility (Barnes, "The Fight for Control"), and rule out male-female alliances. Tambu tries to negotiate with her brother Nhamo to help her plant her maize so that she can go to school, but he refuses. Later he steals Tambu's maize to thwart her dream of getting education. When she sells the maize Jeremiah fights to get the money so that he can do what he wants with it because he is the father, but the teacher who helps Tambu refuses to give him the money. Tambu's strongest feminist statement, "[t]he needs and sensibilities of the women in my family were not considered a priority, or even legitimate", materializes when she encounters gender discrimination in the family's privileging of Nhamo's education (12). She realizes Nhamo's display of masculine power and authority is a result of the collaboration of colonial and ethnic patriarchal power structures that influence the attitudes created by dominant males reinforcing the subordinate position of women.

Tambu battles against her patriarchal fathers (Jeremiah and Babamukuru), and realizes that subjectivity is constructed within the Manichean hierarchy: female and male. Disruption of the unity of the family is foregrounded in the first paragraph:

> I was not sorry when my brother died.…Therefore I shall not apologize but begin by recalling the facts as I remember them that led up to my brother's death, the events that put me in a position to write this account. For though the event of my brother's passing and the events of my story cannot be separated, my story is not after all about death, but about my escape and Lucia's; about my mother's and Maiguru's entrapment; and about Nyasha's rebellion – Nyasha.…whose rebellion may not in the end have been successful. (1)

The tropes of entrapment, rebellion and escape prepare the reader for a battle over domestic space. The collusion of indigenous patriarchy and Victorian beliefs concludes that women do not need too much education: their fate is wifehood and motherhood. Nhamo brags of this masculine privilege (49) and Jeremiah rebukes his daughter Tambu's determined desire for education: "Can you cook books and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables" (15). Babamukuru educates Tambu to serve males, to "be in a

position to be married by a decent man and set up a decent home" (183). When Nhamo dies, Tambu sees his death as clearing the way for her advance towards freedom. The pairing of death and colonial education is also used by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*, with Nwoye's moment of rejection caused by the murder of his best friend Ikemefuna, by his father Okonkwo, who almost considered him his son, but has to prove his warrior masculinity through killing him. In Ngugi's *The River Between*, the Muthoni figure dies so that Waiyaki figure can take his role as the saviour of the Gikuyu community. Osei-Nyame Jnr. states that "Tambu's indictment of both colonial systems of education and Shona/Zimbabwean patriarchal attitudes towards women's education therefore reconstructs seemingly unsympathetic attitudes towards her brother's death into a discourse which enacts a confrontation with both indigenous patriarchy and colonialism" (64).

In *Nervous Conditions* there are culturally specific female homosocial spaces (the garden, kitchen, and daughter's bedroom) to which men have limited or no access, and which enable female homosociality to become a principal resistance strategy. In a different context, developing a theory of masculinity, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick conceptualizes a homosocial-homosexual continuum, and defines homosociality as "social bonds between persons of the same sex" (*Between Men*, 1). Sedgwick sees female homosociality as different from male homosociality, because the continuum of female homosociality is closely woven: "women who love women" and "women who promote the interests of women" are almost one (3, Rich 1980 and 1993, Graham 1997, Storr 2003)[29]. I premise my reading on Sedgwick's female homosociality continuum, as it enables a reading of women who serve the interests of women in pursuit of freedom from patriarchal subjugation, colonialism and poverty in *Nervous Conditions*. Dangarembga's gender war plan pits female bonding against the more "direct" but less successful and self-damaging approach of Nyasha. She uses female homosocial spaces as launching pads for attacks on patriarchy. I will read women's war with man through the tropes of the kitchen garden and the house.

Some critics have noted that Tambu's critical consciousness does not develop within her childhood story in the text with reference to the end of the novel. Uwakweh states that, "[the] self-

[29] Sedgwick's theorization of female homosociality as resistance to male homosociality relates to the radical feminist discourse theorized by Adrienne Rich (1983), Monique Wittig (1992), and Paula Graham's *Lesbian Subcultures and Popular Cinema*. http://www.women-cult-media. org.uk/book/lespop01.htm (accessed 6 April, 2013) 1987). Merl Storr critiques Sedgwick's continuum for desexualising women, and develops her own definition of female homosociality as "a variety of gender regime" with three structural features: "women promoting the interests of women who promote the interests of men; gender identification; 'being one of the girls' and lesbophobia" (50). Storr argues that female bonding does not necessarily always mean supporting the interests of women in general, but acknowledges the possibility of women acting in the interests of men (male authority in domestic and economic terms), to impact on the interests of women (Storr, Merl. "Latex and Lingerie. Shopping for Pleasure at Ann Summers Parties." Oxford & New York: Berg (2003), 49-50). Women can strategically support men as a means to attain their desired goal of supporting the interests of women.

conscious awareness that Tambu gains, [is] not within the text (her story), but outside of it" (78). Sugnet concurs: "If we are to understand, then, how Tambudzai the 'compromised' character becomes (and it takes place somewhere off the page) Tambudzai the perceptive narrator, we might take into account such atmospheric effects of the national struggle" (46, Wright 82,122). Zwicker argues that Tambudzai's moment "of revolutionary consciousness and literary awareness" is when she enters the Sacred Heart School (5). I argue that Tambu's feminist critical consciousness is nurtured and shaped by existential circumstances: being subjected to patriarchal domination, witnessing its multiple manifestations and seeing women's resistance in her extended family within the text.

Critics have explored the roles public spaces (homestead, mission, Nyamarira River) play in gender construction in the novel (Okonkwo 2003, Nesbitt 2003, Basu 1997). I propose that, in addition to these spaces, Grandmother's garden plot is crucial in understanding Tambu's quest for education as an escape route from poverty and domesticity, and her fitful rebellion. I posit that Tambu's formative years in the village before she becomes a candidate for elite education at Sacred Heart are crucial to the development of her critical consciousness. The mature Tambu invokes her rural childhood memories in scripting her transition from the "grateful poor rural female relative" to the critical intellectual. In scripting her story, Tambu evokes the spirit of her dead grandmother, stressing the importance of a female literary community. Here, Dangarembga's novel suggests an implicit intertextuality with Alice Walker's essay, "In search of Our Mother's Gardens", which traces the tradition of female creativity, and encourages female artists to look back to their mothers as models of creativity. Tambu appropriates her grandmother as the source of authority for the authorship of "(her) own story, the story of four women whom [she] loved, and [their] men" (208). Dangarembga comments on the dearth of female models, and on gender politics in the male-dominated publishing industry in Zimbabwe being monopolized by the Zimbabwe Literature Bureau, which "would only allow tales of traditional witchcraft, wives poisoning their husbands…" (George 311-312). In her novel, Dangarembga counters possible negative images, as Tambu desires to "become an intellectual worker, be a story teller whose primary aim include[s] learning how to recognize the constraining disciplinary aspects of received knowledge and how to protect her mind from unwanted indoctrination" (Stone 114). Grandmother becomes a literary foremother, an archive of narrative, exposing Tambu to the importance of matriarchy as a transmitter of oral tradition in the absence of an equally nurturing patriarchy. Dangarembga employs the image of the garden and the metaphor of cultivation, in writing Tambu's journey to feminist critical consciousness.

Grandmother's garden story plants the seed of desire for education in Tambu, for it had "a tantalizing moral that increased (Tambu's) aspirations" (19), because "being sagacious and having foresight, [Grandmother] had begged wizards to prepare her son (Babamukuru) for life in their

world" (19). Viewing him as cultivable, the wizard accepted. Like Ngugi's Chege, Grandmother believes "the colonial world can be manipulated by using its own spiritual weapons" (Channells, 62). Echoing Chege in *The River Between, g*randmother warns Tambu of the "wizards well versed in treachery and black magic" (18), referring to the British. Tambu's historical consciousness originates in grandmother's "history lessons that could not be found in a book" (17). She explains the origins of black poverty as the land evictions of the blacks from fertile soil and male migration to work in faraway places, leaving their families. Male migration imposes African women's double burden of performing male and female roles. Grandmother's garden plot shows how colonialism disrupted the pre-colonial life of plenty, rather, than the intersections of gender, race and poverty inaugurated by colonialism. Grandmother also teaches Tambu a different aesthetic of femininity: an African woman must have a rounded figure, not square with a flat back like Nyasha. Grandmother deconstructs colonial history, and through her Tambu learns the importance of the female narration of family history as a counter-narrative to nationalist discourse. Grandmother educates her about the wizardry of Rhodesian whites, enabling Tambu to read critically the impact of colonialism on Nhamo, and Jeremiah's cringing in the presence of Babamukuru. Thus, Tambu is constantly vigilant against being bewitched. Patriarchy undermines Grandmother's advice at its own peril.

Grandmother inculcates education and a work ethic as a viable counter-culture of resistance to colonialism. Planting maize becomes a symbol of self-determination, because in doing this Tambu subverts gender discrimination. Through self-reliance, planting maize on a subsistence, small-scale basis, and selling the maize in contrast to the exploitative large-scale cash-crop farming of the colonial British farmers, she pays her fees. Subsistence gardening and maize become a symbol of self-determination, attained through an otherwise feminized activity (kitchen gardening) and equally feminized labour (small-scale maize crop for household consumption), which in this case triply subverts the notion of female nurturance: nurturance as food (to the buyers), as financial nurturance (money for Tambu) and critical nurturance (critical consciousness development), and a subsequent exposure to formal education, which Babamukuru builds on once Nhamo dies.[30] Steady states that "True feminism is an abnegation of male protection and a determination to be resourceful and self-reliant. The majority of the black women in Africa and the diaspora have developed these characteristics, though not always by choice…." (*The Black Women* 35-36). Grandmother passes such characteristics of self-reliance and resourcefulness to Tambu through her story-telling. The seeds of liberation planted by Grandmother in her imagination enable Tambu to physically plant maize in Grandmother's garden to raise fees for her education, in the face of the family's privileging of her brother, Nhamo's, education as the male

[30] I would like to thank Grace Musila for pointing out the concept of subsistence and commercial farming.

child. Thus, Tambu re-scripts kitchen gardening for subsistence as a source of income that will facilitate access to the public domain of education, portraying how a capitalist economy transforms household relations and gender divisions of labour. Grandmother survives through endurance and compromise. Tambu must learn to carve her own path, employing fighting strategies appropriate for her time and vision. She retrieves and reconfigures Grandmother's garden as a strategic site to initiate a battle against patriarchy. Thus, a feminist tradition rooted in the indigenous, Grandmother-mother-daughter soil, emerges.

The Sigauke women contribute in different ways to shaping Tambu's feminist consciousness. Tambu says her story is "about my escape and Lucia's; about my mother's and Maiguru's entrapment; and about Nyasha's rebellion – Nyasha, far minded and isolated, my uncle's daughter, whose rebellion may not in the end have been successful" (1). Tambu considers her mother to be entrapped, because Mai Tambu has accepted her fate.

> This business of womanhood is a heavy burden,'.... How could it not be? Aren't we the ones who bear children? When it is like that you can't just decide today I want to do this, tomorrow I want to do that, the next day I want to be educated! When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them.…And these things are not easy; you have to start learning them early. …The earlier the better so that it is easy later on. And these days it is worse, with the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other. Aiwa! What will help you my child, is to carry your burdens with strength. (16)

Her advice to her daughter in the extract shows that she represents the idealized traditional image of African womanhood, accepting her patriarchally prescribed role, valuing motherhood and wifehood and sacrificing herself for the sake of her children and husband. "Though she seethes with an inner rage at her social condition, her fatalistic acceptance of the female condition and status places her in the category of the trapped" (Uwakwe, "Debunking Patriarchy" 80). However, she manages to diagnose the causes of nervous conditions in the novel. In her kitchen, Tambu's mother consistently warns Tambu of the repercussions of stomaching too much English, which indirectly, in her view, causes Nhamo's death and Nyasha's anorexia. Maiguru represents the educated modern middle-class woman who tries to negotiate with and around patriarchy. Nnaemeka argues that the language of feminist engagement in Africa is collaboration, negotiation, and compromise ("Bringing African Women"). Kandiyoti argues that "women strategize within a set of concrete constraints" that reveal or define patriarchal bargains ("Bargaining with Patriarchy" 275). These bargains "exert powerful influence on the shaping of women's gendered subjectivity and determine the nature of gender ideology in different contexts" (Kandiyoti 275). They influence "both potential for and specific forms of women's active or passive resistance in the face of oppression" (Kandiyoti 275). Dangarembga elaborates on feminist textual strategies outlined by Obioma Nnaemeka's negofeminism ("Nego-feminism")

and Ogundipe-Leslie's stiwanism, advocating processes of social transformation including women ("Stiwanism").[31] The contemporary-educated Maiguru renegotiates gendered cultural norms within the patriarchal structure. Maiguru's short-lived open confrontation— temporarily walking out of her marriage— enables her to attain a minimal agency within the constraints of the patriarchal space she inhabits. Eventually, her husband compromises on some rights. Maiguru grows ideologically, and sees another woman's struggle as hers. Unlike in the homestead rebellion, she fights for Tambu's right to go to the elite school, challenging the stigmatization of educated women (184). Women are encouraged to use resistance methods appropriate to their context.

Lucia is a very radical, confrontational, and rebellious woman. In the village meeting convened about her by Sigauke males which is organized without inviting her to defend herself, she pre-emptively initiates an offensive, ambushing the patriarchy, confronting Takesure who is accusing her of witchcraft and refusing to go to his homestead, twisting his ears whilst interrogating him. Eustace Palmer suggests that "[t]he roles are completely reversed as the emasculated Takesure cringes and shrinks into his corner of the sofa and begs for mercy…and Jeremiah is intimidated into remaining in his seat" (187). The defiant Lucia speaks her opinions confidently and assertively. She values female-bonding and female solidarity, as seen by her defending Tambu and taking care of her sick sister until she recovers. She rebukes Babamukuru for excessively punishing Tambu, but also employs "public transcripts" that is performance of submissiveness (Scott, *Weapons*) periodically, thus inflating his ego as is expected of women (158-162) in order to get what she wants. She knows how to negotiate with and around patriarchy and also when to be confrontational. She is also hard-working and self-reliant, living an independent life with her child, and sleeping with the man she desires. She transforms her image from that of a loose unemployed woman to that of an educated, economically-independent single mother.

Nyasha's quests for self-determination create conflict on the home front. Using the trope of anorexia,[32] the dining room table becomes a battleground as Babamukuru exerts his power and authority. The conflict flares up because Nyasha has a radical approach: she refuses to be an underdog for any one. She is confrontational and "has no tact" (118). Her quest for self-determination is complicated by the fact that she is "far minded and isolated" (1), so she is

[31] Stiwa "is about inclusion of African women in the contemporary social and political transformation of Africa." (Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, "Stiwanism: Feminism in an African Context" in *Recreating Ourselves* 1994).

[32] A lot has been written on Nyasha's anorexia. See Pauline Ada Uwakweh. Palmer identifies with the views expressed by MacLeod, Chernin, and Bruch (Palmer 28). She observes that feminist theorists no longer interpret anorexia as an effort by "the female subject" to conform to the image of extreme slenderness demanded by "the fashion industry and media"(Palmer 28). It is viewed as a self-destructive method of resistance.

fighting a lone battle with no support. In this lone battle her body becomes a political battle "ground on which violent struggles over identity take place and through which resistance is articulated" (Zwicker 13). Anorexia becomes a weapon to fight back and take control of her body. Babamukuru wants to control her sexuality,[33] as depicted by his policing of her dressing and movement. In the most violent scene, the after-dance battle, Babamukuru accuses Nyasha of being a whore. He physically attacks her, telling her to be obedient. Presenting the most violent challenge to patriarchy, Nyasha gives him a murderous look and fights back, punching him in the eye and continues "doing what damage she could" (114-115) during the struggle on the floor. The after-dance battle is the culminating moment in Tambu's feminist consciousness, because she realizes that "femaleness and not poverty, education or tradition is responsible for women's position in society" (14). Tambu realizes that "Even heroes like Babamukuru did it" (118). Dangarembga interrogates the effectiveness of radical western feminism represented by Nyasha's performance of rebellion in a public space controlled by patriarchy: the family dinner table. But Nyasha's radical rebellion is also self-destructive because she ends up by breaking down emotionally and physically.

The network of patriarchal power relations that subordinates women provokes a rebellion on the literary home front. Stifled and choked by the patriarchal system, simmering hostility spills over into overt revolt. Women's desire for self-realization and fulfilment creates tensions within the domestic space that at times culminates in physical violence. The subaltern Shona women's struggle for agency is "episodic" in Gramsci's[34] sense. The homestead mutiny in the kitchen, coordinated by the illiterate Ma'Shingayi (Tambu's mother), is provoked by the exclusion of women, including Lucia— with the exception of the patriarchal aunt— at a meeting convened by Babamukuru to investigate the infidelity of relations between Lucia and Takesure, a distant relative suspected of impregnating Lucia, and Jeremiah, who is also sleeping with Lucia. The brief women's revolt is thwarted by class differences, as the educated Maiguru refuses to be part of it. The struggle is quickly characterized by individual acts, with female solidarity thwarted by Maiguru. However, Lucia contests Babamukuru's power and refuses to leave the homestead. Lucia disintegrates the kinship power sustained through bloodlines by enjoying sexual freedom instead of a monogamous marriage, and while the guaranteed paternity of the child is in doubt, this affords her a space to deny Takesure paternity, strategically claiming Jeremiah as the father.

[33] See Carolyn Martin Rooney (2007) for her discussion of the politics of sexuality, focusing on the contradictions of sex as sin versus pleasure, sex as self-expression versus dependence, and sex as individual right versus cultural compulsion.,

[34] Gramsci's Marxist orientation sees the phases of the subaltern struggle for agency in dialectical phases. Phase 1 would be an objective analysis of the situation, phase 2 independent acts of individual resistance or small-group, and personal-scale victories and the final phase would be permanent victories and social transformation (cited in Pius Adesanmi, 303). Frantz Fanon also provides an episodic reading of the development of resistance in the Third World (*The Wretched of the Earth)*.

The questionable legitimacy of the child enables full ownership of her child, and she establishes single motherhood as an alternative family model. Lucia embodies Dangarembga's feminist vision of women reclaiming control of their bodies and sexuality, while envisaging reproduction in female solidarity as a model of alternative possibilities for women, and a demonstration that patriarchy can be defeated by strategic performance of submissiveness and cautious confrontation. Forced to acknowledge Lucia's resilience, courage, resourcefulness and independent spirit, Babamukuru allows her to declare her binary quality: "she is a man herself" (174).

The Sigauke women's subversive actions give Tambu confidence that dominant power can be countered. The grandmother, the mother figures (Maiguru and Mai Tambu) and her cousin Nyasha, all present different kinds of femininity that help Tambu negotiate her own space. Mai Tambu represents traditional womanhood, from which Tambu wants to escape. Maiguru represents one alternative femininity of the educated woman she wants to become, but she also realizes that Maiguru has no power and all her money is taken by Babamukuru. Grandmother teaches her how to negotiate with and around patriarchy, and how to be self-reliant. Tambu learns from Lucia how to perform submissiveness without internalizing patriarchal values. Tambu has to negotiate her way through all these models to achieve her goal of re-creating her self-image from the "grateful poor female relative" (118) to the critical intellectual professional.

Butler develops the notion of agency as subversion and submission from studying European and American women (*Gender Trouble*). This either/or analysis cannot usefully enable us to comprehend an African context. I argue that Tambu practices 'no ego' feminism in Nnaemeka's (2003) sense, in employing strategic compliance, what Scott terms "weapons of the weak" in another context. Studying peasant resistance in South Asia, Scott observes certain behaviour that looks like indifference or submission to power. He names such behaviour "hidden transcripts" of resistance to dominant power. These are unreadable to the powerful – unconscious acts that only become conscious when intelligible to the group, and he uses the term "public transcript" with reference to such open performance of domination and subservience (*Weapons*1-22, *Domination* 1-17).

Dangarembga's "socialist feminist approach to women and production holds that if women had power and authority over their labor, production and reproduction, then they would have commensurate power and position in their societies" (Shaw 18). Tambudzai withholds production (maize money) from Jeremiah, who claims patriarchal entitlement, unlike the educated Maiguru's salary, which is controlled by Babamukuru. Dangarembga admits to being influenced by 1980s socialist debates as an undergraduate student at the University of Zimbabwe: "with all this rhetoric going on about socialism: I didn't know much but at least I could listen to the rhetoric

and read all the correct texts to make my own decision as to what I thought about these people who were giving out these phrases and this jargon" (Veit-Wild, 105). But, she does take this "jargon" into lived experiences.

The Zimbabwean, and broadly African, patriarchal scenario and the resources available inhibit ego-feminism. Tambu's resistance happens with an awareness of constraints as she embodies Grandmother's values of negotiation, meekness and endurance. Her docility is not incapacitating, but is an active force in Saba Mahmood's sense[35]. Tambu lacks material resources to practice Nyasha's radical feminism, and instead "enacts a tactical compliance to Babamukuru's norm of the dutiful daughter that catalyses new ways of performing the role of the female intellectual" (Stone 116). Tambu is conscious of Nyasha's threat to her "agential" vision: "Everything about her spoke of alternatives and possibilities that if considered too deeply would *wreak havoc with my neat plan I had laid out for my life*" (my emphasis 76). Tambu discursively positions her tactful compliance as a conscious war strategy, commenting on Nyasha's lack of tact. The after-dance battle strengthens Tambu's feminist critical consciousness, making her aware that the victimization she experienced at the homestead when Nhamo stole her maize was universal. "It didn't depend on poverty, on lack of education or on tradition….Men took it everywhere with them" (118). It depended on "Femaleness as opposed and inferior to maleness" (118). Tambu's "public performance" of "the image of the grateful poor female relative" (116) dupes Babamukuru into believing "I was the sort of young woman a daughter ought to be" (155). Tambu sees complicity as an economic mobilization strategy, a small price for education. Tactful compliance delays the momentum of emotions that threaten to erupt, pacifying "malignant" and "treacherous" thoughts (39, 116), while escaping "normalization and neutralization by deploying consciousness as a mechanism of escape" (Basu 22). Masochistic delight in punishment is a form of agency, as patriarchal disciplinary intention fails, and Tambu's liberated identity emerges.

Some critics have dismissed the presence and relevance of queer sexuality or lesbianism in Africa and African literature (Ogunyemi "Okonjo", Aina *Women, culture and Society*, Busia "Miscegenation as Metonymy"). Some scholars argue that female bonding is practised differently in Africa, discussing culturally specific forms of intimacy outside the homo-heterosexual divide, unlike Western notions of sexuality and intimacy: "mummy-baby" practiced in girls-only boarding schools, "amachicken or sweeties" practiced in South African townships between older and younger women, "female husbands and ancestral wives" which are non-sexual gender intimacies e.g in Nigeria (Gunkel 210-135, Zabus 2008, Tumale 2011, Amadiume 1998). Mwangi argues that some male African writers use metafictional conceits to claim the presence of

[35] A learner pianist submits to regimes of disciplinary practice and hierarchical structures of apprenticeship, to acquire the requisite agency-mastery in playing the instrument (Mahmood 210).

homosexuality in African postcolonial lifestyles and emergent identities (2009), unlike some daring female writers.[36] Boehmer explores tropes of yearning and desire (137) in *Nervous Conditions*. Selvack argues for Tambu and Nyasha's "same-sex eroticism" (5), analyzing queer colonial objects like clothing, tampons and music. In *The Cultural Politics of Female Sexuality in South Africa*, Gunkel proposes the phrase "female same-sex-intimacy", with possibilities of affection crossing the border of sensual into sexual (Faderman 1997). The question is how can one think differently about desire? I suggest that the queer cousin-sisters' relationship is female, non-sexual intimacy.

Shona has a blind spot which imposes silence on intimacy between women. There are no words or language to speak about it, yet there is a Shona noun: *ngochaniI*, [37] to describe a homosexual man. The homosocial setting of the daughter's bedroom is constituted within the colonial setting of the mission-Christianity tradition embodied by Babamukuru. Recollecting her first night at the mission, Tambu, the mature narrator, struggles linguistically to access an intelligible vocabulary to define her relationship with Nyasha:

> Looking back, I see that is how our friendship began. In fact it was more than friendship that developed between Nyasha and myself. The conversation that followed was a long, involved conversation, full of guileless openings up and intricate lettings out and lettings in. It was the sort of conversation that young girls have with their best friends, that lovers have under the influence of the novelty and uniqueness of their love….You could say that my relationship with Nyasha was my first love-affair….(78)

The language here veers towards friendship, but uses a romantic register: "my first love-affair" (78). Andrade states that "Tambu maintains an ideological commitment to romance while she refuses to partake of it herself" (35). Queer relationship may be encoded in Nyasha's quest for "alternative possibilities" (144), proclaiming "that the only thing that would ever go into her vagina is a tampon", and declaring "that she will never give her virginity to a man" (121). Homoerotic desire is implied in Tambu's lack of interest in boys, with her realizing the narcissism of male courtship (111). However, she enjoys bodily contact with Nyasha: "Tambu climbed into my bed, where we *cuddled* up to each other and fell asleep" (emphasis mine 121). Yet the

[36] Lesbian desire has been represented in Anglophone African women's writing, for instance, Marija's pass at Sissie in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Kiljoy* (1977) and Selina's seduction of Gaciru in Rebekkah Njau' *Ripples in the Pool* (1975).

[37] Homosexuality has been argued to be un-African. Mark Epprecht's "The Unsaying of Indigenous Homosexualities in Zimbabwe: Mapping a Blindspot in African Masculinity", *Southern African Studies*, 24. 4. (1998) 631-51; *Boy Wives and Female Husbands: Studies in African Homosexuality*, Eds. Stephen O. Murray and William Roscoe. New York: St Martin Press, 1998; Oliver Phillips, "Zimbabwean Law and the Production of a White Man's Disease". *Social and Legal Studies* 6.4 (1997) 447-91. The literary texts which acknowledge male homosexuality are: Nevanji Madanhire's *If the Wind Blew* (1996), Charles Mungoshi's short story in *Writing Still*, ed. Irene Staunton, Harare: Weaver Press, and Petina Gappah's short story "Midnight from Hotel California" in *An Elegy For Easterly*. London: Faber and Faber, 2009.

cuddling is not projected as an erotic kind of intimacy but rather sensual, as Tambu is represented as "desexualized" – her sexuality squashed at the homestead (42), and Nyasha's "libido is represented as diffuse and unformed" (Andrade 31-2). Nyasha's request, "Can I get into bed with you, Tambu?" (204) appears to be a normal familiar request, intended to test rejection. In Shona culture (to which Tambu and Nyasha belong), in the women's *tete* where Tambu is taught about menstruation, girls are also taught the power of the erotic, how to "stretch the labia" or "practice elongation of the virginal labia minora" in the passage to womanhood, to enhance sexual pleasure (Bagnol and Mariano 275, Tamale 2011). Sharing a bed is common in African families, so Maiguru's reaction is telling: she "was not very pleased the next morning when she found us in bed together" (121) and she recalls Tambu to her bed. Maiguru's anxiety is a fear of erotic sexual relationship: lesbophobia. The central conflict revolves around dangerous sexuality as Maiguru, co-opted by patriarchy, instills paternalistic ideas of what is proper, declaring D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* unsuitable reading for Nyasha.

The tampon – the phallic object – allows Tambu and Nayasha to debate the unequal power dynamics of heterosexual sex. As men gloat over their achievement of breaking women's hymens, the tampon is represented as a signifier of sexual alternatives (96). Tambu loses herself on the dance floor with her female friends, "tingles with pleasure" at Nyasha's gaze and playfully slaps her on her large backside (92), an indication of the enjoyment of female – same-sex – intimacy. Tambu and her friends laugh and point "to heterosexual couples" (111). The group of girls challenges the politics of naming and imported terms by not labeling their relationship, and rejecting sexual identity as subjectivity.[38] Regulating and controlling women's sexuality is central to the survival of patriarchy, and those in complicity fight a losing battle, foreshadowed in Tambu's nightmarish dream. The dead Nhamo chases her, yelling at her for deserting her husband and children: "Babamukuru and his two ferocious dogs track [her] down to return [her] to [her] spouse" (90). The patriarchal project to develop an extended African family is defeated. Tambu has her own dreams: she wants to be an intellectual and enjoys female same-sex intimacy. Female homo-social spaces enable her desires, destabilizing heteronormativity. Dangarembga emphasizes companionship and intimacy as conduits of emotional and sexual gratification, in contrast to the hetero-normative emphasis on phallic pleasure.

Dangarembga resuscitates Ngugi's Muthoni in Tambu, transcending the limits prescribed by society, reconciling modern education and classical tradition, and subverting the traditionally

[38] Scholars engage in the debate on the politics of naming sexual identity, and most African women who are in same--sex intimate relationships deny the label "lesbian", even though in some cases the relationship becomes sexual. (Chantal Zabusi's "Of Female Husbands and Boarding School Girls: Gender Bending in Unoma Azuah's Fiction" and "The Text that Dare not Speak its Name: Contextual Heterosexuality and Same-sex Desire in African Fiction". See also Chantal Zabus 2008, Sylvia Tumale 2011, Ifi Amadiume 1987, 1998).

subservient image of the African woman as good-daughter-wife-mother. Ngugi uses her as the embodiment of culture: her death makes way for Waiyaki's Gikuyu revolution, whilst signalling the death of Gikuyu culture. Torn between a diametrically opposed foreign religion and tradition/culture, Muthoni can only reconcile both through death, as she tells Waiyaki: "Tell Nyambuya I see Jesus. And I am a woman beautiful in the tribe" (wa Thiong'o 53). Having exhausted negotiation, Tambu's open rebellion materializes as she accepts her punishment. She is enabled by the retrieval of her rural formative memories that expedite her realization that a reverence for Babamukuru and all he stands for "had stunted the growth of (Tambu's) faculty of criticism, sapped the energy that in childhood [she] had used to define [her] own position" (164). Her subjectivity split in two: the good daughter's physical body on the bed, and her intellectual self-observing self in the daughter's bedroom. She becomes the author of her story when she embodies intellectual subjectivity, voicing her desire not to attend her parents' wedding, seeing punishment for her rebellion as "the price of [her] newly acquired identity" (171). Dangarembga writes back to women in the history of colonization, with Grandmother as the visionary enabling Tambu's vision and replacing the phallocratic male lineage. Tambu navigates the spectrum from Grandmother, aunt Lucia, Nyasha, Maiguru and her mother. The good-daughter-intellectual subjectivity materializes through harnessing and blending the best aspects of colonial education, English language and tradition with oratorical skills. In Alice Walker's "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens", flowers planted by grandmothers did not grow, just as their talents were thwarted, but in *Nervous Conditions* the seeds planted by Grandmother grow, nurtured by the community of women into a bumper harvest, "through the process of expansion" (208) into an apparently feminist consciousness, producing a scholar who maps a Zimbabwean model of feminism in her own garden.

The revolutionary potential of women's actions lies in their ability to demythologize and destabilize patriarchal power and authority, reinforcing Tambu's confidence that dominant power can be subverted, attaining individual agency through resisting chauvinism, voicing and controlling productive and reproductive capabilities. Dangarembga acknowledges affinities with international feminism, with a nod to Germaine Greer (Whyte 12), Alice Walker and Mariama Ba: "The Western white feminism does not meet my experiences at a certain point, the issue of me as a black woman. The black American touches more of me than the white ones" (Veit-Wild 106). Dangarembga delineates African feminism rooted in Zimbabwean women's lived experience as they interact and fight with colonial and indigenous patriarchy within the domestic space, whilst addressing their specific needs and goals. In an interview with Jane Wilkinson, Dangarembga was asked whether *Nervous Conditions* is autobiographical, nd replied:

> The point is that one has to write about things one feels strongly about …[there] were things that I had observed and had direct experience with. I also felt that these things were larger than any one person's own tragedies or so forth. So I would say that at the moment my writing really does come from things that are quite concrete, that I had quite a lot of first-hand experience of. (1992, 190)

Nervous Conditions is an intersection of colonial modernity and tradition, and an intricate amalgamation of the self – social, and political. Dangarembga shifts the textual format, rewriting the European tradition of bildungsroman, foregrounding and acknowledging the collectivity of women in contributing to the formation of Tambu's individuality, as well as her "psychological development and social success", undermining the myth of a self-made exceptional woman (Andrade 28-37). What emerges from the home front war zone is the need for African women to know how to negotiate their way through and around partriarchy. An unstrategic confrontation using radical feminism is destructive for Nyasha, who ends up in a psychiatric hospital, while submissiveness to traditional patriarchally defined femininity is also life-threatening for Tambu's mother, who ends up in bed. The home front battles are won by women who are able to negotiate their way through the obstacles mounted by patriarchy, like Grandmother, Lucia and Tambu. On the other hand, the all-powerful Babamukuru is destroyed by his rigid authoritarian approach and he also ends up having nervous conditions, his masculinity deflated by his daughter. However, women at war with men defeat both colonial and traditional patriarchy in different ways through supporting one other, and emerge as heroines.

4.3 Men and women in the war

Freedom Nyamubaya's writing focuses on women soldiers, during and after the war. Her work derives its themes mainly from the lived experiences of women during and after the second *chimurenga*. She does not romanticize or glorify the war; nor does she diminish the brutalities of war. Nyamubaya was born in Eastern Zimbabwe in 1958 and died in 2015. She went to train as a guerrilla fighter in Mozambique in 1975 and actively fought in the front-line. She joined the ZANU guerrilla forces in 1975 in Mozambique and actively participated in the war. This section focuses on her autobiographical short story, "That Special Place" (2007), which revisits the war twenty-three years later. The story unfolds at the Tembwe Training Camp, Tete Province in Mozambique. The female protagonist Ticha embarks on a quest to train as a freedom fighter and fight for the independence of colonial Zimbabwe. She narrates her ordeal as a new recruit at the hands of the Camp Security Commander, Nyathi. The thesis of this section is that "That Special Place" re-claims women ex-combatants' heroic contributions and acknowledges ordinary male ex-combatants' courageous fight, during the second *chimurenga*. I argue that Nyamubaya's "That Special Place" redefines the notion of hero and re-creates the male-hero image as a brutal violent

abusive undemocratic anti-intellectual rapist leader of the war. I employ the house trope, the rape motif, and the gun and stick, to analyse the relations of men and women at the rear base.

Primorac says war novels "contain a space-time inhabited by armed combatants and /or those training to be combatants in the Second Chimurenga" (*The Place of Tears* 127). Following her definition, I read Nyamubaya's "That Special Place" as a war story because it unfolds at a training camp. My reading of the nationalist training camp is framed by Agamben's concept of "a space of exception" (*Homo Sacer* 97). In a different context, he explains that in a "space of exception" "not only is law completely suspended but fact and law are completely confused- everything in the camps is truly possible" (Agamben 97). Nyamubaya ironically titles a "space of exception" "That Special Place." The nationalist training camp portrayed is a significant space where young women and men who fought against Rhodesian forces, and became future leaders of the new nation, grew into new persons. So, Nyamubaya revisits the past to ask urgent questions about the people emerging and created in the second liberation struggle, and to make sense of the nation at present. The question is what kind of subjectivity is constituted by a nationalist camp? What is the implication to the new nation of the identity that develops from this war?

My analysis of Nyamubaya's short story is informed by Emmanuel Ngara's proposition that she uses a realist approach. In a different context, Ngara states that Nyamubaya's writing is influenced by realist socialist ideology (*Ideology & Form*). He argues that she represents objective reality and social analysis (ibid. 124). The narrator of the autobiographical short story uses the first-person narrator to claim ownership of the experience and the authority to tell it. Nyamubaya's short story represents men and women's relations at the rear. Primorac explains that the war was an "unstable and shifting space of the armed struggle [which] remained dual (the rear in Zambia and Mozambique, and the front, in Rhodesia itself)" (*The Place of Tears* 126). The fifteen-year-old protagonist, Ticha, abandons school, leaves home and crosses into Mozambique. Her first point of contact at the Tembwe Training Camp is the security department which is headed by a man called Nyathi. Innocently and excitedly she writes a synopsis of her life and her journey to the camp, as per security procedure, but this is only the beginning of her ordeal.

The ideology that informs the way the war is conducted and practised in the security camp and frontline is depicted in the protagonist's statement that if you were a new recruit, "you were deemed innocent if you were a man, and of [Nyathi's] educational level or lower. If you were a woman, even if his intention was to sleep with you, he first had to fill you with fear; but if you were just a tiny bit more educated than he was, then you had to be thoroughly beaten" (220). The quotation brings to the fore four nationalist ideological flaws and practices: gender inequality, the sexual abuse of women, anti-intellectualism, and the use of brute physical violence as a way of managing the camp and the war.

Gender inequality is reflected by the patriarchal hierarchy model of chiefs, the camp commander and security commander, and all the security personnel are men. Therefore, Ticha joins a male-dominated war (Nhongo-Simbanegavi, *For Better or Worse?*). Anxiety about the female recruits and female guerrillas is portrayed by Nyathi's statement that he was "going to take [her] to Mbuya Nehanda, where the spirit medium would learn the truth" (222). Nyathi says this while taking her to the prison hut. She is taken to the prison without being charged with criminal behavior, but for interrogation. Nehanda's spirit was believed to be leading the first *chimurenga* in the spiritual sense and was invoked for inspiration and to claim the right by women guerrillas to fight on the war front. Therefore, Nyathi belittles the spirit to show the women who think they can come and be like men, and that Nehanda will not protect them from male violence. Domineering traditional patriarchal men like Nyathi teach new female recruits that they should be subordinate and submissive to male guerrillas, and should not aspire to lead or fight on the war front.

Nyamubaya represents gender relations during the war, using the rape motif. When Ticha gives the synopsis to Nyathi, he does not even read it. He accuses her of lying and of being a prostitute. Nyathi shouted, "'sit properly, prostitute! […] I also know that you were bitching around with those Frelimo soldiers before you got to Batalio!'" (224). The Batalio is the group of comrades that came with her to the camp. Nyathi is described as having "a loud mouth, […] He used torturous language, and made vulgar jokes about inmates. Vicious and cruel, he had not even completed his primary education when he was recruited into the liberation struggle. With nothing in terms of brain, he thrived on sadism and intimidation." (219). This is the Security Commander, and every new recruit experiences his interrogation. Patriarchal beliefs and heterosexual militarism authorize Nyathi's use of violent strategies to break down women's political will and resistance, to instil incapacitating docility and subservience. One month later after being released from the prison Ticha was incarcerated, and Nyathi comes to rape her (227).

Nyamubaya exposes the hegemony of the phallus and its destruction of women's humanity through sexual violence. In *On the Postcolony*, Mbembe states that "power dons the face of virility," its psychic life, transcendence and orgasm emanate from female pain. Ticha says, "Nyathi had a big black penis whose erection got harder with resistance […]" (228). The image of the phallus signifies power and authority, demonstrated when Nyathi "broke his way into [the fifteen year old Ticha's] vagina and escaped with [her] virginity" (227). However, the phallus is rendered vulnerable after a "fierce struggle [when Ticha] managed to spit out a piece of his flesh from his right thigh" (227). So, the ex-combatant women were not all passive victims of war rape. Ticha achieves agency by fighting back in self-defence, and she does not succumb physically or psychologically to Nyathi's rape.

Freedom Nyamubaya testifies that she "was raped and that is the truth.…We must accept the truth and show what happened" (Lyons 228). Robert Atkinson says that telling one's story has transforming power and serves the four functions of autobiographical and life stories: psychological, social, mystical and cosmological. I suggest that Nyamubaya writes her story in psychological and social modes. Atkinson explains that "The whole process of psychological development focuses on a dialectic of conflict and resolution, change and growth" (ibid 6). Nyamubaya tells her story in order to "wrestle with [her demons" and "ultimately connect with [her] soul" (Atkinson, *The Gift of Stories* 4-5). She also writes in the social mode, which is to teach others from her own experience. She tells her story in order to give insights into the human dilemma, human struggles and human triumphs.

The rape of female combatants with nowhere to report it depicts that the Tembwe camp "constitutes a state of exception" (Gamben, *Homo Sacer* 97). Margaret Dongo concurs that there was rape and nowhere to report it because "jungle law" operated in the nationalist camps (Lyons, *Guns* 263). The security commander who is supposed to protect the freedom fighters violates their bodies. Nyathi is a sadistic, masochist, rapist with a big ego like his big black penis, satisfied by violating women sexually and emotionally at the barracks. His sense of masculinity is boosted by forcing women to submit to his authority and his violent sexuality through aggression. These instances of the rape of women depict the limits and failure of the liberation struggle to forge gender equality, respect of human rights and justice, and to protect the women and children. The rape of women portrays that the nationalist leaders were not responsible and caring leaders but, on the contrary, they sexually violated women. Nyamubaya speaks out in such matters, denouncing the rape of female combatants by male nationalist leaders in the training camps and frontline bases during liberation which has been silenced to protect the image of the war at the expense of women ex-combatants.[39]

The rape motif runs through most of the female ex-combatants' narratives of the second liberation war. In a different context, the collected narratives of female ex-combatants recorded in Staunton's *Mothers of the Revolution* (1990) and Musengezi's *Women of Resilience: The Voices of Women Ex-combatants* (*2000*), reclaim women's contributions to the liberation struggle that have been marginalized, they voice the prevalence of female rape that taints the liberation struggle, and inscribe a different historical narrative of the second *chimurenga* from the former female fighters' perspective. The taboo subject of female guerrilla sexual abuse became an open debate during 1997 when rape claims and revelations by senior female government officials

[39] The film *Flame* by Ingrid Sinclair ignited debate and caused a furore because it also represented the rape of female freedom fighters by commanders and chiefs during the war (*Flame*. Harare: Zim Media. 1996). See Jane Bryce, "Incendiary Interpretations and the Patriotic Imperative: the Case of Flame" for a detailed analysis of the film and the discussions surrounding it. *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture*. ed. Robert Muponde and Ranka Primorac. Harare: Weaver Press, 2005.

threatened to expose those officials in nationalist camps who raped and fathered children of whom they were not taking care.[40] Rape through seduction, co-option and "sex for soap" by commanders, was done by male guerrillas of all ranks. The rape of female Zimbabwean combatants shares commonalities with experiences in South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) and Umkontho weSizwe. In an interview with Curnow, Thandi Modise states that women had to protect themselves against rape from both the enemy and their male counterparts at the training bases ("Thandi Modise, a woman in war"). Women ex-combatants developed strategies to survive the dehumanization and trauma of rape.

The war spills over into civilian society. Nyathi becomes a serial rapist, raping civilians in the front-line, and he is only demoted "after several brave rural farmers complained that their women and children were being sexually abused in the base camps back at home" (220). These women were the *chimbwidos* (those recruited to do errands for freedom fighters during the second *chimurenga*). The women were performing roles crucial to the execution of the war. The above quotation suggests that women who had not joined the war were also victims of rape at the front line bases by nationalist war leaders whose conduct was informed by traditional patriarchal values. The rape claims heightened tensions between the civilian population and those liberating them. Women were also treated as collateral damage when Nyathi "took his revenge by defecting, and led a battalion of Rhodesian soldiers with armored cars to massacre refugees at Nyadzonia, the unguarded camp where he was known as commander" (220). The report of the massacre is an historical fact and it happened on 9 August 1976 when thousands of refugees, mainly women and children, were killed (Lyons 2004, Bhebhe and Ranger 1995). It was a huge blow to ZANU because it meant they could not protect their own women and children (White, *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo* 220-221). The destruction and bombing of Tembwe led to atrocities and brutality against women and children, as casualties of male power struggles, but this also seems to be an apocalyptic symbol of the destruction of post-colonial Zimbabwe.

The civilian postcolonial female writer Vera also draws attention to the incestuous rape of two civilians. In *Under the Tongue* (1996), a female character, Zhizha, is raped by her father Muroyiwa, to boost his masculinity which has been deflated by his failure to participate in the second liberation struggle. In *Without a Name* a male guerrilla fighter rapes the female protagonist, Mazvita, while calling her *hanzvadzi* (sister), is raped by the Nyathis of the liberation struggle, while her village is burnt by Rhodesian forces. He violates her body and makes her pregnant while claiming kinship (Vera 29). Bu, Mazvita snubs the war discourse of the land, and commits infanticide against the child conceived from a war rape. Postcolonial Zimbabwean

[40] This was a response by senior ranking ZANU-PF ruling party women ex-combatants threatening to expose top government men who had raped and fathered children in the camps and whom they were not taking care of, as well as an investigation for looting war veteran disability funds (*The Financial Gazette*, 1 May 1997).

women are speaking out about war rape, depicting how women were abused and traumatized. By so doing they are presenting an alternative version of second liberation war history.

Revealing the dark side of the celebrated liberation struggle as a period when violent patriarchal nationalist masculinity was founded on raping women is "reviving the narrative of the liberation struggle in general and the heroic roles of ZANU-PF and Mugabe in particular" (Raftopoulos, "Nation, Race and History" 165), and is a very daring action by Nyamubaya. Ranger states that "Patriotic History" was in full force during ZANU-PF's campaign for the 2002 presidential elections in Zimbabwe ("Rule by Historiography" 220), Muchemwa discusses the politicization of state funerals, *biras* and galas in the ZANU-PF government's fight for legitimacy from 1980 – 2008 ("Galas, Biras"), and Shepherd Mpofu discusses the contestability of the notions of nationhood as imagined by the Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe and the ruling ZANU-PF leader post-2000 ("Toxification of National Holidays"). Thus, Nyamubaya's short story is counter-discursive to nationalist "patriotic history", deconstructing the sanitised version of the male hero circulated at Heroes' Day and other ritual ceremonies. She does this at a very crucial time when the nationalist party is seeking legitimacy to rule indefinitely because of its heroic liberation struggle contribution. The story presents the ugly side of how the nationalist war leaders, while claiming hegemonic responsibility for protecting the nation and its citizens, sexually violated female combatants and civilians at the rear and front-line bases.

According to the old guard, joining the liberation was for people who had no hope of achieving anything in colonial Zimbabwe. During her interrogation, Nyathi asks Ticha what grade she was doing, and when he says form 3 he shouts at her, "You haven't written the truth. […] Why would you leave school and all that comfort to come to a place of suffering and dying?" (222). Nyathi's question discursively counters the nationalist war narrative that ex-combatants joined the second *chimurenga* for patriotic and ideological political reasons. Norma Kriger states that other guerrillas joined the war with "agendas other than African nationalism and African majority rule" (*Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War* 170). Ticha says one of the recruits, Che, "was in his second year [at] university. He understood something about communism, and certainly more than they did" (227). In a different context, Muwati et al. argue that "The alternative reasons for joining the liberation war signify that the nation cannot only be viewed from a singular, straightjacketed trajectory of history – that is the patriotic as defined by the elite" ("Contesting 'Patriotic History'"174). The text suggests that the War Commanders are ideologically, politically and intellectually empty: they are leaders simply because they are men and they joined the war first. But this also raises questions about the kind of leadership in the post-colony, because after the war the leaders of government and industry were the same ideologically and politically illiterate nationalist war leaders.

Nyamubaya retrieves the dismembered brutalized images of female and male combatants with "disfigured" faces, "disfigured cheeks" (219) likened to 'bullfrogs" (219) and "mince-meat buttocks" (218), beaten by their own comrades and not by Rhodesian enemies. The camp inhabitants, especially the new educated recruits who are considered "homo sacers"[41], they are considered sell-outs and are reduced to bare life through ruthless torture and rape. They are forced to lie in their confessions to escape the brutal beatings which make Ticha unconscious for three days. Power confronts pure life, without any mediation, no laws (Agamben, *Homo Sacer*). Nyathi is a law unto himself: even the Camp Commander cannot tell him what to do. The security department headed by Nyathi is the liminal site of incorporation: "whether or not atrocities are committed depends not on law but on the civility and ethical sense of the police who temporarily act as sovereign" (Gamben 99). Unfortunately, Nyathi's decisions depend on his mood.

The nationalists' use of violence towards imagined enemies and as a method to instil patriotism and discipline are depicted as retrogressive. The new recruits, which include Ticha, are victims of "the paranoia, persecution, and secrecy that characterized the prosecution of the war" (Muchemwa, "Why Don't You Tell the Children a Story?" 11). Muchemwa probes the dark psychic spaces of Nyathi as a father figure who derives his power from unreflective traditional African patriarchy, "psyched into a neurotic state of perpetual vigilance"(11-12). His discussion illuminates the psychology behind the senseless beating aimed at making recruits surrender their bodies and minds to the father. The uncompromising pursuit of masculinity "insists that violent dominance of women, blind obedience, bloodletting, and suppression of humane qualities be incorporated into the ethic of guerrilla fighter" (ibid 13).The beatings are done for every crime while people are made to sing (Chiwome 1990, Pongweni 1982). Nyamubaya, revisits the war culture of brute violence in the context of a regime that has turned against its people, beating everyone into submission – the white farmers, opposition forces and civic organizations – and even killing them.

Nyamubaya tells her story to give insight into human dilemmas, human struggles and human triumphs. In treating the disorders of Algerian soldiers, Fanon argues that colonialism produces an "unhealthy psychology" for the black man, and uses the metaphor of amputation to signify how a black man, weighed down by European discourses of Africa- consisting of tom-toms, cannibalism and intellectual deficiency, "ends up perceiving himself as an object" (*Black Skin* 112). Nyathi is a traumatised victim of the colonial experience whose disorders, produced by events of the war, are exacerbated by "the arsenal of complexes that has been developed by the colonial environment" (*Black Skin* 30). He is one of the "Peasant youths, many of them poorly educated or illiterate, who were among the first to train as guerrillas…. they developed a pride in their military

[41] Refers to a person both sacred and accursed who can be killed or raped without it being labelled as murde, people who are divested of political status (Agamben 1998).

vocation with a marked disdain for education and distrust of the educated" (Chung 140), commonly referred to as "*magrade* seven" during the war. They went to war first and became commanders, but were afraid of ideological challenges from the educated (Moore 1995, Bhebhe and Ranger 1995). Fanon's metaphor of the wounded body makes Nyathi's homophobic personality towards the educated and his senseless violence comprehensible.

Education is the source of paranoia and persecution in the story. The narrative of Ticha embodies an ideological generation gap, with the old guard nationalists represented by Nyathi, and the tragic story of the educated guerrillas who joined the liberation struggle on the premise of idealism and egalitarian vision, but encountered authoritarianism which privileged the traditional hierarchy of patriarchal chiefs. Anxiety towards the educated is reflected in Nyathi's hysteria when he slaps Ticha, depicting that for him the war was to be fought by people who could not do anything else at home. Ticha's education threatens the potency of male guerrilla masculinity, reinvigorated, affirmed and inflated by fighting in the war. While she makes a decision to come to war even though she is educated up to Form 3, Nyathi has not completed his primary education.

Anti-intellectualism also frustrated those radical university volunteers who joined the struggle with an ideological vision of democratizing it. Che's radical Marxist-oriented socialism belongs in the social space of "intellectuals" in the senior levels of secondary school or university studies, inhabited by Nhari and Badza and the vashandi leaders.[42] Che is facially disfigured, tortured after reciting his "biography" to the security men: "Naively [he] had thought his literacy would be of use to the liberation army. Instead he suffered for it and never rose to section commander" (227). Charles Sampindi's *Pawns* and Alexander Kanengoni's *Echoing silences* portray the cause of Thomas Nhari and Dakarai Badza's rebellion as animosity towards educated young cadres. Luise White concurs that Nhari and Badza were wary of how the educated guerrillas were treated with suspicion, described as "sell-outs" because they opposed the sexual abuse of female guerrillas by commanders, particularly Tongogara (25-26). (Martin and Johnson 180-81, Moore 75-76, Chung 139-141, Lyons 145). Tongogara, the ZANLA commander, authorized by top leadership,

[42] The *vashandi* (workers), the Marxist-oriented young commanders, were committed to the unity of ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) and ZAPU (Zimbabwe African Peoples' Union) and were the primary force behind the Zimbabwe Peoples' Army (ZIPA). They united ZANU's Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) with ZAPU's Zimbabwe Peoples' Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), and led the war from 1975 to early 1977. They were considered a threat to the "old guard" returning from Zambia prisons in 1979 (accused of assassinating ZANU National Chairman Herbert Chitepo). In January 1977, the returnees asked the Mozambican state to imprison the young leaders for an indeterminate time, and they were not released until a few months before the first Zimbabwean elections of 1980. "Certainly, when some of the *vashandi* first joined the struggle and recited their "biographies" to the men entrusted with keeping infiltrators out of the ranks, their references to the likes of Frantz Fanon and Jean-Paul Sartre as influences did not stand them in good stead. The security personnel were inclined to think they were spies and meted out the requisite punishment." (David Moore, "Democracy, Violence, and Identity in The Zimbabwean War of National Liberation: Reflections from the Realms of Dissent". *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 29. 3 (1995) 375-402.

ruthlessly crushed the rebellion, using 250 newly-trained cadres: "the reinforcements were dubbed *Gukurahundi*"[43] (White 27, Martin and Johnson 166), a term used to refer to the Matebeleland massacre (*The Stone Virgins*). Nhari and Badza were assassinated[44]. In Dangarembga's *The Book of Not*, guerrilla anxiety about the educated is depicted in the denouncement of Babamukuru on his trial at the *morari* (vigil night), for being a "*Mutenges*i" (sell out) (6), "not exactly a collaborator, but one whose soul hankered to be one with the occupying Rhodesian forces because he sent Tambu to a white school (6).

The definition of a hero continues to spark debate among former liberation fighters, politicians, academics and writers calling for a revision of the selection process monopolized by ZANU-PF in Zimbabwe (Kriger 1995). In an interview with Bryce, Vera comments that "But there's this duplicity – people came back, and all the heroes are men all of a sudden" (222). This is a common phenomenon in nationalist governments in Africa, as voiced by the former Umkhonto we Sizwe commander for the ANC in South Africa, Thandi Modise: "When it comes to men, it's heroism. When it comes to women it's almost like you should be ashamed. Why otherwise do we not accept that women played a part in the [armed] struggle?' (Curnow 36). In "The Politics of Creating National Heroes", Kriger discusses the debate ignited by the definition of hero, and who decides who is buried at the Zimbabwe heroes' national shrine 1995. Heroes are defined as freedom fighters who were loyal, patriotic and subordinated their individual interests to the collective interests, contributing directly to the final victory of independence ,and future ones who will do the same post-independence (Kriger 145). The heroes are those who were in the front-line but there is evidence that women were also in front-line combat[45]. Women's tasks have been

[43] Literally means the first rains of the season that sweep away the rubbish.

[44]The Nhari rebellion still impacts on the post-colonial state, as indicated by the forced resignation of Mutambanengwe who had been appointed a judge of the Electoral Commission in Zimbabwe, and sources said the reason was that ZANU-PF hawks never forgave him for supporting it (The Zimbabwe Situation, 16 February 2013).

[45] There is evidence that women were in the frontline and were involved in combat on the frontlines, with some battalions only of women, headed by a female commander. A report on a male ZANLA fighter in court "confirmed that there had been four women in the accused's party" (Leda Stott, *Women and the Armed Struggle for Independence in Zimbabwe, 1964-1979*, 28). Rudo Hondo, a woman combatant, was promoted to the ZANLA general staff in 1978, and in February 1978 when she was in command of 30 fighters, was captured by The Rhodesian army, interrogated but refused to talk even though tortured, and finally escaped before Independence. ("Rudo Hondo: Heroine of the Liberation Struggle", The People's Voice, March 13-19, 1994, p.13.) and Lyons, especially p. 162-170, for testimonies of women who were on the frontline, some being female-only battalions, led by female commanders. See also Paul Moorcraft and Peter McLaughlin, *Chimurenga: The War in Rhodesia, 1975-1980.* Marshalltown: Sygma Collins*, 1998), p.129 and* Norma Kriger, *"The Politics of Creating National heroes: The Search for Political Legitimacy.*

labeled inglorious, not heroic, yet they were vital roles for the success of the liberation struggle, even though the majority of women were denied access to frontline combat (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2010, Lyons 2004). Therefore, the denial of recognition to female guerrillas emanates from the notion of a frontline defined as the centre of military action as the determining factor of hero status, excluding the rear and civilian society considered "safe".

Atkinson states that telling one's life story "can have an important role in constructing the self-image or identity we want for ourselves" (*The Gift of Stories* 5). Nyamubaya sets up a project to reclaim women combatants' heroic status. Elshtain asserts that women are absent from the war story and definitions of war in fiction and history because of the definition of what constitutes the "front", who decides where it is located and "who is authorized to narrate it" (*Contaminated Communities* 213). Nyamubaya redraws the lines by showing the interconnectedness of the front line, rear and civilian space, in order to claim heroic status for the marginalized. She deconstructs a nationalist male leader who had been the recipient of a heroic state funeral by revealing that he was a rapist, authoritarian, anti-intellectual, and an abuser of women and children. She clears the ground to reconstruct her own image as a heroic woman who remains ethical and principled, survives torture, hunger, hard work and rape. She revisits the past in order to re-write the war script, redefining the notion of the front-line, while inscribing women as heroes.

4.4 Conclusion

Both Dangarembga and Nyamubaya represent women as heroines in their pursuit of freedom and self-defined identity. Babamukuru and Nyathi accuse innocent women of prostituting themselves in order to inflict harm on them. Both Babamukuru and Nyathi are violent and physically beat innocent women in order to instil obedience and submission, but their victims fight back and reclaim their agency. The texts suggest that those women were subjected to violence in the home front, rear, and front-line. The writers challenge traditional patriarchal values that sustain African patriarchal structures. They both focus on hegemonic patriarchy, and show that some men are also victims of abuse by the hyper-masculinized man who insists on his version of masculinity and femininity. However, the writers depict that this version of masculinity is unsustainable, as women rebel and deconstruct his power and authority.

Chapter 5: Independence? Tracing the trajectories of gender

> A burden lifts as a new day appears. This new day. A place to start again, to plant hope and banish despair, to be restored. Everything is changed …. All that is bright among them is bright still: the sky, the altars in Gulati, hope. (Vera, *The Stone Virgins* 45)

> Nationalism, that magnificent song that made the people rise against their oppressors, stops short, falters and dies on the day that independence is proclaimed. (Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* 163)

5.1 Introduction

In nationalist agendas the defeat of colonial forces brings independence, but the diversity of women's expectations of freedom surpasses merely having one's own flag. The female characters in the focal texts discussed in this chapter – Tambudzai Sigauke (Tambu) in *The Book of Not* and the Gumede sisters Nonceba and Thenjiwe in *The Stone Virgins* see independence as described in the first epigraph: "a new day" and "a place to start again, *to plant hope* and banish despair, to be restored" (*The Stone Virgins* 45, my emphasis). While for Sibaso, the former male guerrilla turned dissident, independence is a compromise he cannot accept, for the civilian-educated male historian Cephas this is a time for healing and rebuilding. This chapter focuses on the images of liberated gender politics: the demobilised male and female guerrillas, the young civilian women welcoming independence and the new men and new women in the first two decades of independence. This chapter develops the previous chapter by showing Zimbabwe's transitional and post-transitional challenges to creating inclusive democracy within the first two decades of independence, particularly in respect of the women living in the aftermath of war and under patriarchal rule and repression, despite the official "liberties" afforded them. At the same time, it analyses new possibilities and opportunities that opened up for black women and men after independence, enabling them to re-create their identities, while enacting the re-configuration of gender. In short, Dangarembga and Vera grapple with inequality, constant political repression and the re-domestication of women, while also asserting black women's agency.

Even though independence opens up prospects for women's liberation, the hope of feminists that black Zimbabwean women's participation on the war front during the second *chimurenga* would translate into gender and ethnic equality in post-colonial Zimbabwe was only a myth. Berlant in "Cruel Optimism" studies this phenomenon which, prevail in America during the 1980s post-Cold War period as the social-democratic promise of a good life, became unattainable. Berlant explains

that cruel optimism "names a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility.…Cruel optimism is the condition of maintaining an attachment to a problematic object *in advance* of its loss." (emphasis in original, 21). Tambu, Nonceba and Thenjiwe desire the "cluster of promises" (Berlant, "Cruel Optimism" 20) that independence offers: gender liberation and equality, inclusiveness, prosperity and happiness. This discussion will draw on Berlant's concept to explore how the characters' hopes for liberated gender practices in the Zimbabwean context are a cruel hope. In this context, cruel hope is "planting hope" (Vera 45) in an infertile, dry and arid land, anticipating and believing in the harvest of promised gender equality, economic prosperity, access to education and jobs, a multi-ethnic and multiracial society, and a just and democratic nation. This discussion lays bare these hopes and dreams, and examines what constitutes them. I argue that independence created cruel hope in literate Zimbabwean citizens, and that the Matebeleland massacres offered a discursive space to renegotiate for reformed African masculinity. I propose that the unflinching hope in independence demonstrated by demobilised female freedom fighters is unsustainable in a nation-state ruled by an unreformed traditional patriarchy. This chapter has two sections: "*Unhu-ubuntu*: the struggle for recognition" in *The Book of Not*, and "Liberated gender?" in *The Stone Virgins*.

The Book of Not traces the development of Tambu, an intelligent teenage girl from the 1970s, chronicling her disintegration, and running parallel to an account of the painful transition from minority-ruled Rhodesia to a theoretically democratic majority-ruled Zimbabwe in the 1980s. *The Book of Not,* the long-awaited sequel to *Nervous Conditions* published eighteen years later, breaks new ground as the first ever published sequel by a black Zimbabwean woman, and following in the footsteps of her literary foremother, Lessing, with her *Martha Quest* series, and Fuller's *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood* and its sequel, *Scribbling the Cat*. Dangarembga's sequel narrative, from the first bildungsroman, *Nervous Conditions*, and its sequel *The Book of Not*, links the past with the present. *Nervous Conditions* has been successful in tracing the non-linear development of Tambu's organic feminism (see Chapter 3 of this thesis), while being aware of the historical conditions shaping colonial and traditional patriarchy. In *The Book of Not*, Tambu deviates from her feminist agenda, choosing patriarchy instead as her model in her aspirations and hopes for status, and entrance into the white world. She severs ties with black women, seeing herself as better than them, while striving for recognition by her white teachers and classmates at the Sacred Heart Girls School and at Steers, D'Arcy and MacPedius Advertising Agency where she works as a copywriter. *The Book of Not* will be used as a transitional bridge from war to peace, discussing the theme of socio-political healing. Using the trope of stealing, I analyse the betrayal of independence promises and the consequent disillusionment of women, and using the trope of dirt, I discuss the complex dynamics undermining feminist sisterhood. I will pay attention to the intersections of gender, class and race

in the formation of an elite class of women like Tambu, struggling for recognition and status. I propose that Dangarembga writes from a nationalist feminist perspective, and her sequel enables the continuing nation-story to unfold concurrently with Tambu's development, as an on-going process of women's struggle for recognition and liberation. I argue that Tambu's search for wholeness through affirmation by white women and patriarchy demonstrates cruel hope.

In *The Stone Virgins*, Vera examines demobilisation, independence and the re-domestication of women, as well as the Matebeleland *Gukurahundi*, from a feminist perspective. The story revolves around the family history of the Gumede women. Tenjiwe and Nonceba's mother divorces their father because she was tired of his desire to have a son (102). Sihle, the aunt, has her own home in her father's village and refuses to marry the man who fathered her four children, or to move to his village (163). Thenjiwe and Nonceba are part of the family tradition of women defying convention and asserting their independence. They transgress boundaries set by an ethnic patriarchy in a xenophobic nation founded on ethnicity. This produces a backlash against women's independence and a *gukurahundi* (a colloquial Shona expression meaning the soft rains after the harvest that clean away rubbish and filth) is unleashed to cleanse the nation of dirt and re-domesticate women. Thenjiwe is murdered, while Nonceba is raped and mutilated by Sibaso, a former freedom fighter turned dissident. Vera writes in and out of the nation, destabilising the still waters of the grand nationalist narrative of heroism, while redefining African manhood. I read the text via the discourse of filth with reference to the *gukurahundi* metaphor, to examine how women's and men's aspirations for independence turn into cruel hope, and how they reverse the tide by turning that cruel hope into agency.

The female characters' transformations in the novels are mapped against significant historical moments in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe independence was negotiated by the Lancaster House Agreement in Britain, under pressure from a protracted second *chimurenga* war by ZAPU, ZANU and the Rhodesian government. Independence was declared on 4 April 1980. While most Zimbabweans, especially women, hoped the majority government would create a new Zimbabwe nation with a broader vision of an inclusive (non-sexist, multiracial, non-ethnic or tribal) united Zimbabwean identity, the ZANU nationalist party had a different agenda. Mugabe's 1980 inauguration speech called for reconciliation, but there was no "proper strategy for reconciliation in Zimbabwe, following the end of civil war" (Bourne 103). There has been a common agreement that Zimbabwean transition towards democratisation remained in what Bleuel, in a different context, has called a"zone of uncertainty" ("Customer Dissatisfaction" 49), because "despite [the transition's] much heralded success [Zimbabwe] did not make an identifiable break between war and peace" (Kriger, *The Politics* 6). After independence the war still hovered in the background, because there was no symbolic program to help move the nation forward, such as Jomo

Kenyatta's 1963 "Harambee" policy in Kenya or Nelson Mandela's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa. The Catholic Commission's report on the Matebeleland *Gukurahundi* makes the same point (1997).

5.2 Literary Representations of Independence

There are different literary representations of independence. Vera and Dangarembga's literary representations of Zimbabwean independence are not celebratory. They fall into the same category of disillusionment, with independence symbolised by Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns*. Vera's short story "Independence" captures the gendered subjectivity that emerges at independence, as well as women's mood towards independence. The plot of the short story revolves around the gendered nature of Zimbabwean independence: an enthusiastic crowd welcomes a prince from England, coming to hand over power to the new male black leaders. The crowd does not see him; he is whisked away in cars with tinted glasses and remains ensconced in government structures. This scene symbolically depicts how ordinary people, especially women, become mere objects of male nationalist performance of splendid and empty entrance into government offices. A female prostitute is one of the women, excited to witness the birth of the new nation, but is demoralised by the exclusionary nature of the male-dominated ceremony. Her mood and attitude towards independence become indifference, and she "withdrew into the safe space in her mind" (28). While men enthusiastically participate in the independence ceremony on-screen, for discouraged women, represented by the female prostitute, it is work as usual.

The story signals women's disillusionment with independence, which does not offer anything to improve their daily lives. The prostitute meets a man who intends to "celebrate independence properly, with a cold beer and a woman" (29). He asks the woman to remove her clothes as the old flag is lowered and the new Zimbabwe flag raised: "the man pushed the woman onto the floor. He was going into the new era in style and triumph. She opened her legs. When he was through he sent her home" (29). In "Yvonne Vera and the Politics of 'Opening Spaces'" and " 'Carving' Other Images for African Women," Vambe states that the "graphic violation of the woman by the man is the sexual consummation of the new unequal relations between black men and black female subalterns in a new Zimbabwe" (321). The sexual violence is a symbolic gesture towards the re-domestication of women. Unequal power relations between men and women were endorsed at independence, as independence became the attainment of political power by black men, while the cultural and colonial structures oppressive to women were not broken. Vera uses the image of the excluded, sexually-violated female prostitute, foreshadowing the re-domestication of women in post-colonial Zimbabwe.

In Vera's *The Stone Virgins*, old women are sceptical and suspicious of independence, they look for signs to bury the past, and "They expect sudden and spectacular fissures in the rocks. They expect some crack," declaring a new day. "Instead, nothing moves" (45), things remain the same. Young women like Thenjiwe and Nonceba see independence as depicted in the first epigraph - a new beginning, enabling them to re-create and redefine their identity, and it is this representation of independence as the new era that is heralded by the demobilised guerrillas.

The Book of Not represents the emergence of a fragmented, fractured and damaged society after independence. On Babamukuru's body "scars of war were added the complications of Independence" (197-8), after he was hit by a stray bullet that cripples him on Independence Day. For the general population independence is a feverish and jubilant event, accompanied by settler fear and flight from deteriorating standards (196-7). Commenting on independence celebrations, the authorial voice says,

> Ah, that Independence! It is not a time you forget. People thronged the streets, rejoicing so thoroug hly that there was no place for remembering the acts of their hands and their feet, and their teeth, and the fingers, boots, and mouths their children committed. So, we never remembered and grieved together as women sorrow in groups many years after a birth, 'Is there a pain like that! And so much blood! It is like the blood of slaughter, my sister, isn't it, that blood of childbirth! (196).

The authorial voice bemoans the failure to remember and mourn, in order to forge the future in unity at independence. The new nationalist government is indicted for failing to come up with a transitional program to cleanse the nation from "so much blood" spilled, to restore individual, family and community relations for all races, ethnic groups and genders. Tambu uncritically joins those who refuse to remember the violence of the past. This discussion will analyse the implications for post-colonial gendered subjectivity of this unreflective celebration in a nation conceived in violence and unhealed wounds.

5.3 *Unhu-ubuntu*: "The struggle for recognition"[46]

The Book of Not traces Tambu's struggles for recognition and the undoing of her subjectivity, in the process drawing attention to the events that re-shaped the terrain of the Zimbabwean transition from colonial war-torn Rhodesia to Zimbabwe. The story can be read through the lense of the violence inflicted on the body of Tambu's sister, Netsai, at a *morari* (night vigil meeting with freedom fighters) in the opening scene of the novel, where Tambu witnesses her sister's leg being ripped off her body by a grenade. The actual violence foreshadows the destruction of Tambu's

[46] Charles Taylor in "The Politics of Recognition" (1994).

sense of self (3), also still unreconstituted by a fragmented nation that "never remembered and grieved together as women sorrow in groups many years after a birth, 'Is there a pain like that! And so much blood!'" (196). Lack of remembering, mourning, healing and reconciliation haunts the post-colonial nation. The premise of the discussion is that Tambu struggles for recognition, in search of the wholeness gained from complete acceptance. I argue that Dangarembga writes back to a "re-emerging Rhodesian discourse" (Primorac, "Rhodesians Never Die"), in the process producing the image of an angry nervous post-colonial female victim. I propose that the nationalist feminist discursive approach Dangarembga adopts in *The Book of Not* sacrifices form for content: Tambu becomes an ideological instrument for the re-definition of *unhu-ubuntu* philosophy and the aesthetic beauty of language is lost in the nationalist project. I also posit that the text attempts to re-define *unhu-ubuntu* cultural philosophy from a nationalist feminist perspective.

Dangarembga enters into dialogue with many texts in the Zimbabwean literary canon, engaging with them historically to challenge intentional historical amnesia. Dangarembga retrospectively represents the transitional moment from war to peace, and to post 2000 *jambaja* (violent takeover of land from white commercial farmers). *The Book of Not* is in conversation with an international archive produced by white Zimbabweans post-2000, claiming Zimbabwean identity and the right to land, while denying Tambu humanity.[47] There is, in particular, a strong inter-textual conversation between Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* (2006) and Fuller's *Don't Let's go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood* (2002). There is a high level of inter-textuality in the literal geographical setting, themes and tropes of meaning that appear in both Fuller's and Dangarembga's texts. The plots unfold from the literal geographic setting of Mutare, Zimbabwe and are set within the temporal span from colonialism to the first two decades of independence, and *chimurenga* war violence against the female characters frames the opening chapters of both stories. Fuller's narrative is narrated from a six-year-old Rhodesian child's perspective, focusing on her poor white Rhodesian family's struggles for survival in colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. In the chapter "Losing Robandi" the Fuller family loses their farm through the new land redistribution program implemented at independence (157). An image of the white victim is developed, and the hardships her parents go through seem to inscribe her belonging, while exonerating them from the "land grab" by Rhodes in the imperial project and the 1930 Land Apportionment Act (Primorac, "Rhodesians Never Die" 212). The discourse of white victims losing farms they bought and worked hard to develop was very loud during the post-2000 land

[47] David Lemon's *Never Quite a Soldier* (2000), Catherine Buckle's *African Tears: The Zimbabwe Land Invasions* (2001) and its sequel *Beyond Tears* (2002), Alexander Fuller's *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood* (2002) and its sequel, *Scribbling the Cat* (2004), John Osborne's *The Guiding Son* (2004), Derek Huggins' *Stained Earth* (2004), and Peter Godwin's *When the Crocodile Eats the Sun* (2006).

redistribution exercise (Buckle 2001, 2002), discrediting the ZANU-PF nationalist discourse of re-taking stolen land from settlers. Fuller redeploys Rhodesian discourse to reclaim her Zimbabwean identity (Chennells 1995, Chennells 2005; Primorac 2010: 204). But she struggles to name what Cecil John Rhodes and his Pioneer Column did in the utterance: "I could say: Taking? Stealing? Settling? Homesteading? Appropriating?....Whatever the word is, they had been doing it to a swathe of country they now call Rhodesia" (*Don't Let Go* 25) – all of which provokes an uneasy sense of belonging.

In *Don't Let's Go to The Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood*, the narrative voice is located in the colonial period and the characters reproduce the key black stereotypes assumed in Rhodesian discourse. In a text written twenty-two years after independence, the freedom fighters are referred to as "terrorists" (4), black students are uncivilised, do not know how to flush a toilet or eat with a knife and fork, and smell of wood-smoke and hut-fires (149): all are dirty, and black men are infantilised, and unfit for leadership. This Rhodesian discourse is sustained by the narrator, even when the colonial assumptions on black inferiority are discredited by the first black student in her school at Independence. White people are victims of reverse racism in the post-colonial nation, as depicted by the racial tensions at a former group A school for white farmers' children in Mutare, in the chapter titled "Independence", as the black students exclaim, "Argh! I smell white pork," and Fuller realises that, "My God, I am the wrong colour" (8). In an interview with Faith Mkwesha, Fuller is unapologetic about the Rhodesian discourse she reworks and redeploys:

> When you write from an adult voice then I think you have to interpret. How do I interpret the war, that kind of racism, or alcoholism? [pause] There's no safe way to interpret it because on one level I love these people, I might not agree with what they did, but I love them, and they're my people. So from a child you accept to love them anyway, you don't care what they are or who they are, so I think it lets me give a sense to the reader of what it was like to be there then.(2009)

Fuller's explanation is that she is writing from a child's perspective, hence her use of stark racist language, belittling and dehumanising blacks, when describing the post-2000 Zimbabwe land redistribution which problematizes her claim of belonging. While I appreciate that she is writing honestly about what she thought as a child, and not filtering the extent of racism and its manifestations, one would expect some authorial intervention to indicate how the white way of seeing blacks was skewed. Fuller differs from Lessing, who dismantles Rhodesian discourse, and is not constrained by Rhodesian nationalist narrative genres of the time: "[w]here she deals with what are seen as stereotypes in colonial writing, we can see them being constructed, contested and transformed" (Chennells, "Self-representation 144). While my focus is not to discuss why they are different, I would like to point out that Lessing's deconstructive approach, discussed in the

previous chapter, enables her to represent the construction of whiteness convincingly, while discrediting the colonial system. In *The Book of Not*, Dangarembga challenges re-emerging Rhodesian discourse, and contests the right and ability of "neo-Rhodesians" (Primorac, "Rhodesians Never Die" 204), Fuller in particular, to speak about and on behalf of Zimbabweans about their history. But when Dangarembga writes back to self, in the sense of Mwangi (*African Writes Back to Self*), she is in dialogue with white Zimbabweans, shifting the discussion from race to socio-political healing.

Tambu's aspirational goals for socio-economic liberation and status are shaped by many factors. Schmidt explores the comparative historical decline of the economic base of African women and their loss of sense of self, arguing that "European political and religious institutions did not recognize authority in the forms exercised by women in pre-colonial Shona society [and] old ways of acquiring status and social recognition became increasingly dysfunctional" (*Peasants, Traders, and Wives* 7) under European governance. Education becomes the only key to unlock the door to success and acquire social recognition and status. Dangarembga's aesthetic re-creation of the transitional moment draws attention to the independence promises: the "cluster of promises" includes economic emancipation, land, equality, and happiness, evident in utterances such as "Soon everyone will have a patch [piece of land] like that!.… After the war! Everyone will have something. That's what the elder siblings are promising" (182). "'Imagine, what it will be like!….You'll be able to go into whichever toilet you like….you'll be treated like everyone else" (94) says Nyasha.

While the filial relation claimed by siblings is problematic, Dangarembga brings to the fore the promises given to the people. Tambu's trust in colonial education as an escape route from poverty is inspired by Babamukuru. Tambu chooses the powerful, educated, and rich headmaster, Babamukuru the patriarch, as her model. Babamukuru's "social upliftment project" (Muponde 2011: 389) through education strengthens Tambu's hopes of re-creating her self-image through a professional career. In a different context, Kandiyoti argues that "patriarchal bargains exert a powerful influence on the shaping of women's gendered subjectivity and determine the nature of gender ideology in different contexts" ("Bargaining with Patriarchy" 275). Tambu seeks education and is prepared to bargain with patriarchy and sacrifice some things to get it:

> My possibilities were infinite in my present circumstances! This I truly believed, and was ready to face *the little inconveniences to be dealt with along the way*. I was on a direct route to the future so bright – or I in those tomorrows – would light up more than my community, but I imagined, the whole universe. (my emphasis 82)

Conforming to patriarchal femininity as a form of negotiation is the bargain Tambu makes with patriarchy. She sacrifices her freedom and dignity for "patriarchal dividends",[48] and this has damaging effects on her sense of self. Her desire for crumbs from the patriarchal table stifles any chances of her challenging patriarchy.

Through Babamukuru's vindictiveness Dangarembga is issuing a warning against getting cosy with patriarchy. Babamukuru is spiteful, cruel, and abusive when he feels he has been disobeyed, and he projects his own feelings on to Tambu. His feeling that Tambu is disobeying him revives memories of his own beatings: "This scar came because of you!" showing her "the ragged valley rifted" in his arm "where the dagger had gouged to slit the artery" (168) "to terrorise his wayward victim with memories of his near-death at the hands of the guerrillas" (Muponda and Odhiambo 168). He punishes Tambu for betraying his dream by failing her A-level exams, without considering that she had no teacher, and "curtailing her horizons" by predicting failure. He evicts her from his house saying, "I shall not provide anything else to help you!" (Muponde "I am well" 399). Tambu becomes homeless. Making patriarchal bargains with untransformed patriarchy that is aggressive, stifling, controlling and violent is a huge risk for women, because patriarchal investments can be withdrawn when patriarchy is threatened or disobeyed.

Through Tambu, Dangarembga maps the legacy of racism that has dehumanized and limited the opportunities of black women from the colonial to the post-colonial era. Tambu desires to enter the white world and have her humanity acknowledged. Using the trope of stealing, Dangarembga maps the history of the undoing of Tambu's identity and sense of self, from the colonial period to the first two decades of independence. The white nuns, including Sister Emmanuel, the headmistress who gave Tambu a scholarship to study at Sacred Heart School, are racist. They enforce the dichotomies of the "segregationist policies designed to keep the 'Other' from contaminating so-called civilized white spaces" (Hlongwane,"A piece of person" 454). Black students are housed in the African dormitory, near the sewerage system, and Sister Emmanuel employs racist stereotypes of dirt and waste in 'othering' blacks, accusing the black girls of being uncivilised and clogging up the school sewage system with hygiene pads (63). She tells them they were brought to the school to "polish their behaviour!" (63). Tambu wallows in misery, regretting being black and female (64): she has not yet developed the emotional maturity to reject racism and she believes she has to behave herself in a submissive way to attain her dream. She resolves

[48] In "Connell's Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique" Demetriou explains that Connell uses the concept of "patriarchal dividend" in *Masculinities* to explaining that "Man's position in patriarchal societies yields a series of material advantages, such as higher income or easier access to education" (341). In a footnote, Demetriou explains that in "New Directions in Gender Theory" (p. 162), Connell uses "patriarchal dividend" to refer to the overall advantages that men gain in patriarchal societies, and "material dividend" to refer to the more restricted meaning in *Masculinities*.

to recreate her image from the uncivilised dirty girl to an intellectual by excelling academically, and she believes "[t]his was something [she] could do to convince anyone of [her] worth" (64).

Tambu aims to be on the honour roll, win the Silver Cup for the best O-level results, and have her "name.…inscribed on [the school trophy cabinet] for everyone to see: Tambudzai Sigauke. Then people would know who I was, a person to be reckoned with and respected, not a receptacle of contempt." (114). She got the highest marks with seven A-level passes (150), and the second highest was Ntombi, another black classmate. The unravelling of Tambu begins when she miserably realizes that "[her] name was not recorded" (155) on the honour roll, even though she deserved it. Denial of recognition, of affirmation, and of acceptance constitute the "undoing of [Tambu's] subjectivity" (Kennedy, "Mortgaged Futures" 88. 112). Sister Emmanuel "steals" the O- level prize from Tambu and gives it to Tracey Stevenson, a white girl who came third. She changes the rules, claiming that the College seeks "to nurture well-rounded human beings" who excel in both academics and sport (155). Giving Tambu the prize would have been an acknowledgement of her humanity, flushing away her dirtiness, rendering her an equal, and this threatens the status quo. Tambu puts up with so much indignity for a dream that is represented as attainable, but turns out to be remote. She embodies the cruel hope of the young ambitious intelligent post-colonial black female figure, nurturing misconceived ideas that meritocracy exists in an ethnic, gendered post-colonial nation. In her optimism and enthusiasm, Tambu embodies the national mood at independence, and the nationalist goals of reconciliation.

The other black students react, accusing the school project of developing submissive colonial womanhood and racism. In one instance, Patience, a black girl, is reprimanded by the racist matron for trying to take a biscuit meant for young white girls, and Tracy, a white girl, offers Patience one. She ignores her gesture and walks on, but Tambu takes it and eats it. This infuriates the other black students in her dorm, because she has been unable to act in solidarity with her black dorm-mates. As a gesture of allegiance to colonial Rhodesian patriarchy, the headmistress, Sister Emmanuel, invites volunteers to knit gloves for Rhodesian soldiers. Tambu volunteers, as a gesture of *unhu-ubuntu*, which is a Southern African world stance: "We are who we are in relation to those around us" (Villa-Vicencio, "Ubuntu" 114). Tambu's response and her action are based on the ethics of *unhu-ubuntu* which are grounded in principles of kindness, humanness, reciprocity and moral uprightness. As in the biscuit incident, Tambu misunderstands the connotations of loyalty and disloyalty, and relations with her dorm-mate deteriorate. Ntombi and the other young black women are not beholden to the patriarchal discourse of *unhu-ubuntu* because they have not made any bargain with patriarchy. Ntombi does not adhere to *unhu-ubuntu* and thus her fighting spirit is alive and strong.

Submissiveness to patriarchy disempowers Tambu. She cannot fight for her prize stolen by Sister Emmanuel and Tracy, for *unhu-ubuntu* "required an elder aunt or *sahwira*, someone you were related to not by blood but by absolute respect, liking and understanding to go forward to the authorities in order to present your case, showing that what disturbed you was not the flighty whim of one badly brought-up individual" (164). Ntombi lays aside her grudge and advises Tambu to question and challenge the theft of her prize, offering to go with her to confront the headmistress, but she refuses. Having internalised racism, she indulges in self-blame, believing that she deserved to be cheated (157). Her "failure" to prove worthy of the scholarship silences her.

The undoing of Tambu's sense of self reaches its climax when she eventually loses her personal identity. She immerses herself in white spaces, but the notice "right of admission reserved" (203) remains in place at the single-ladies dorm. Mrs May, the matron at the single- women's dorm, denies Tambu physical existence, stripping her of her identity by persisting in calling her Isabel, even though she corrects her. At one point Tambu misses a phone call because she did not call her. Tambu tells the landlady angrily that her name is Tambudzai Sigauke, and insists that the matron stop calling her Isabel. Mrs May switches to calling her Getrude. Dangarembga represents the politics of names, mis-naming and the failure to accommodate different cultures and politics in the post-colonial state. She illustrates the resilience of racism and the refusal of many whites to reform and to engage with black people on a personal level as equals.

The theme of continuing generational economic dispossession of black people by the post-colonial descendants of settlers is stressed by Dangarembga. In the post-colonial nation-state, Tambu's aspirations and hopes are frustrated, as Rhodesians had not died "in sufficient quantities to cause a great blimp in the course of history" (198). The authorial voice comments that while "Mr. Swanepoel had [died]" his children, "the twins [who] were fluent in Afrikaans", were still there (198). The quotation suggests that the descendants of the colonisers are still there and speaking Afrikaans, implying a refusal to integrate into the land they occupied. Colonial conflict spills over into the twenty-first century, as Mr Swanepoel's language and practices are perpetuated by his twin children, still controlling the economic sector. Tracey Stevenson, who acted in complicity with the teacher by accepting the prize stolen from Tambu, is the Advertising Executive for Afro-Shine and Deputy Creative Director Advertising at a white advertising company where Tambu works. Tambu thinks she has realized her full potential by coming up with a new concept, but Dick, another colleague, gets the credit. Tambu is devastated when she realises that Dick will present the concept to the client: "I was not to meet the client. My copy was, but I was not good enough to merit that" (236). When the concept wins a prize, Tambu is denied due recognition, and Dick gets the award. This becomes the breaking-point, and the angry

Tambu resigns. It marks the end of her national optimism, and the abandonment of hope that the new nation would be founded on redistributive justice and equality for all races and genders.
The trope of theft is effective in rendering the frustration and loss of hope in Tambu. In "The Politics of Recognition" Taylor observes that,

> our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm; can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being . (Taylor, "The Struggle for Recognition" 25-26)

Tambu experiences the "feelings of nonexistence" described by Fanon in *Black Skin, White Mask* (21). She is grievously injured by the denial of recognition, and suffers from depression, succumbing to "strange behaviour", "unfamiliar seizures", and "fits of weeping" (174). Hlongwane gives an analysis of the dominance of the trope of incompleteness: "a piece of a person"; "loose limbed" ; "my heart strained and tore", foregrounding Tambu's fragmentation and the wholeness that evades her ("A Piece of a Person"). Tambu's personal experiences of loss and denial are symptomatic of larger national struggles, and serve as an indicator of the state of the nation from independence to the 2000s.

Dangarembga uses first-person narrative and body imagery in *The Book of Not* to authorise Tambu to tell the story of her own life and describe how she sees the world. Tambu uses body images to represent how she felt: when the headmistress asks for volunteers to knit gloves and balaclava helmets, Tambu depicts her dilemma: "The impossibility of it, of the putting up of four fingers, of the stretching of the hand on the arm" (132). Sister Emmanuel uses the quota system to threaten the black girls when angered by Tambu's defiant use of the whites-only toilet. She stresses white generosity and warns the girls to follow segregationist rules. Tambu wants to challenge Sister Emmanuel, but she struggles "to bring [her] voice into the room.… It was impossible, [she] crumbled" (74). After Tambu is conned of her Afro-Shine concept, walking back to the hostel she balances unsteadily "on toppling paving stones" (243). When she is given notice by the hostel matron, she feels her "knees drain away" (244). Such body imagery demonstrates how racism affects Tambu physically and emotionally, attacking and undoing her sense of self and subjectivity.

The trope of anger is deployed to represent the workings of affect in constructing disappointment and disillusionment. Tambu "allows suave thugs at Sacred heart" to "mug her, and she is too

angry to do anything about it" (Muponde, "I am well" 167). Beaten by circumstances, Tambu is "out of sorts" (243), "miserable" (245), and her frustration develops into anger, "surges of aggression" "perpetual rage" (199), "chronic depression" (200), so "irritated by these white people" (209) and walking away becomes the only form of response to the injustices she experiences. The novel ends with a "confused, uncertain disoriented Tambu," (Muponde and Odhiambo 166) wondering, "Oh, how was I ever going to function in the new Zimbabwe, if I couldn't go to necessary lengths, stop people putting their names to what in the end was mine!" (220). Although Tambu occasionally "vacillates between surrendering to an alienating colonial environment and asserting herself" (Hlongwane, "A Piece of a Person" 450), most of the time she is silent – silenced by lack of "parity of participation" (Fraser 29). In Tambu's case colonialism, tradition and nationalism in the post-colonial state have created different forms of material inequality and economic dependence that deny Tambu "parity of participation" (Fraser, "Social Justice" 74). Tambu cannot speak against the benevolent philanthropic institution. She develops a strong faith and attachment to the school as a beneficent institution, and wants to belong to the white community. Hence her desire to please and receive affirmation from her benevolent patriarch, Babamukuru, and white colonial educators, but her need to fit into the white world silences her.

Dangarembga re-writes independence and gendered subjectivity at independence, at the same time aware of the events leading to independence from a perspective of the 2000s. In an interview with Rooney, Dangarembga states that she found it difficult to engage with the sequel, "[b]ut in 2000, when the current spate of land invasions began in Zimbabwe, I felt I needed to go home. There I saw that some of the issues had not really been dealt with" (57-58). Land and racism are emotive issues, and in Dangarembga's aspiration to reinterpret Zimbabwean history from the centre, she redeploys racist nationalist discourse, at times overstretching the rigid Manichean binaries of white and black, man and woman, good and bad in mapping the unravelling of Tambu's sense of self. Tambu internalizes racism and metamorphoses into a racist. Tsitsi Dangarembga states that "I find it difficult to write about race. Perhaps because I feel so strongly about it, having gone through so much as a result of it.….[T]he catch with racism – looked at objectively, it sounds too absurd to be true" (*Nervous Conditions* 209). The author's anger resurfaces in the text and is symptomatic of the lack of socio-political healing in the nation, re-emerging post 2000.

Dangarembga utilises allegorical forms in *The Book of Not*. In "national allegories…the private individual destiny of a female figure" is "an allegory of the embattled situation of…public.society" (Stratton, *Contemporary African* 41-2). The text enacts the post-colonial history of the nation through Tambu's story. Dangarembga appropriates the trope of Mother

Africa from what Stratton defines as "the sweep of history strand, which serves as the index of the state of the nation" (41). The allegorical element is enacted in Tambu's persistent denial of recognition by different generations of undying Rhodesians, depicted through the trope of theft. Tambu functions as an embodiment of the land of Zimbabwe, and a symbol of the nation being "raped" of its resources continuously by the descendants of Rhodesian settlers.[49] Tambu's body becomes a writing site for national emotions of anger. The text's extension of the woman trope operates against the interests of women, providing a rationale for their oppression, and for acts in complicity with traditional patriarchy that uses women to whip up national emotions. The continued theft of Tambu's prizes, even in post-independent Zimbabwe, has ideological resonance with nationalist discourse.

I argue that, in *The Book of Not*, Tambu is an unconvincing female character. The author seems to be too engrossed in the subject and seems unable to detach the character from her personal anger. The fictional milieu is unreal: the text tries to create characters which turn out to be vessels of the author's polarized race politics. In an interview Dangarembga states that in *Nervous Conditions* she worked "in the mainstream [of] feminist analysis" (George and Scott 318), but in *The Book of Not* she has a different agenda. In "Southern States: New Literature from and about Southern Africa," Primorac states that Tambu's persistent exploitation "may be read as a feminist version of the Mugabeist nationalist narrative which.…mimics anti-colonial resistance" (250). *The Book of Not* "resembles…Mugabeist state fiction in that it replaces narrative complexity, which is the hallmark of its famous prequel, with near-linearity: a parallel plot line (dealing with freedom fighters and their treatment of "sellouts") is sketched in rather than developed, and the same is true of key characters like Nyasha and Netsai (Primorac 250). I concur with Primorac and I suggest that Tambu becomes an ideological instrument, silenced and denied subjectivity, to further the author's agenda accusing whites of not desiring reconciliation. In addition, the narrative partly absolves Robert Mugabe from criticism in the international arena by giving the context of his actions.

Dangarembga recuperates the *unhu-ubuntu* that academics like Stanlake Samkange and Tommie Marie Samkange, in *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism: A Zimbabwean Indigenous Political Philosophy* (1980) advised the winning government to adopt as a guiding principle to "guide and inspire

[49] Feminists in postcolonial theory have studied how anti-colonial nationalists have used women as symbols of nation-building, biological producers of the nation, transmitters and producers of national culture, signifiers of national difference and reproducers of national boundaries, while denying them liberation (Samuelson 2007; Boehmer 2005; Stratton 1994: McClintock 1995). In Zimbabwe nationalist aesthetics, male nationalist writers also use women as symbols; while in ZANU-PF nationalist discourse women are carriers of political ideology and aesthetic inspiration (see Chapter 2 of this thesis). In *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* (1994), Stratton analyses the different "embodiments of Africa in the figure of a woman" (39) in the male literary tradition.

thinking" in the new era (1980, 103). They argued that "the war divided us into two groups: warring blacks and white[s],…a number of very hostile political parties, and…[also] into very sensitive tribal groups" (43), but *hunhuism-ubuntuism* "dictates that the main task of the victor at the next election should be reconciliation" (44). They recommended *hunhuism* as an African approach to the post-conflict rebuilding of a cohesive Zimbabwean community and society. They proposed *bira*…a ceremony to cleanse the nation…from spilled blood and a reconciliation ritual. It is no coincidence that in *The Book of Not* there is a character called Mr Samkange, the intelligent A-level chemistry teacher admired by Nyasha (120). Dangarembga acknowledges the need for memory and remembering, but depicts how the *unhu-ubuntu* the Samkanges advocated was already floundering.

> *Unhu*, as we knew it, required containing, and even negotiating and renegotiating passion. So, little could be done in a situation where negotiation was not practicable. Then you came up against a pane, as of glass, through which you saw *unhu* was dysfunctional. There was a reason for this dysfunctionality, obscure to me then, which was the key to the philosophy itself. In a phrase, this was the principle of reciprocity. *Unhu* did not function unless the other person was practicing *unhu* also. Without reciprocation, *unhu* could not be *unhu*. The practice of it assumed that *unhu* was a given. We believed, as had been the case over the months, years, ages, of the concept's development, that we were all together in extolling its excellence, and in wanting nothing but the practice of *unhu*. How confident all our ancestors and ourselves were that this practice would lead to the preservation of the world, and improve life, to the world's benefit!" (Dangarembga 119).

The quotation defines *unhu*, and describes a linear understanding of history, depicted in African ancestors extending *unhu* to European settlers who did not reciprocate it. Historical materiality is integrated into the narrative by a "we" subject. The "we" refers to the post-colonial generation which has fallen into the same trap as the pre-colonial ancestors in offering reconciliation as part of *unhu-ubuntu* to the white settler descendants, who also behaved like their ancestors by not reciprocating *unhu-ubuntu*. In the same vein, Tambu is persistently exploited, even in a post-independent nation-state, "by white racists who abuse *unhu's* qualities of 'authentic' African reciprocity" (Primorac, "Southern Sates" 250). Tambu's practice of *unhu-ubuntu* is a symbolic performance of reconciliation at independence, as suggested by academic nationalists like the Samkange family's vision.

The text depicts the (im)possibility of performing *unhu-ubuntu* under repressive conditions, showing the futility of practising it in an environment of competitiveness, individualism and racism. Primorac rightly states that the failure to reciprocate *unhu-ubuntu* implies that whites

betrayed the trust of Africans, and deserve what is happening to them ("Southern States" 250). The failure of *ubuntu-unhu* has also been raised in the South African context, and it was central to the 1993 Interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the South African Reconciliation Commission (TRC), leading to the need for re-evaluating and redefining *unhu-ubuntu* (Villa-Vecencio, *Political Reconciliation in Africa*". Dangarembga's reconstruction of the past in the present, post 2000, appears to be over-determined by the contemporary situation, trying to make sense of the unfolding race tensions on commercial farms in the 21st century. In the process it embarks on a project of re-evaluating African culture and *unhu-ubuntu* to achieve nationalism.

The Book of Not portrays how feminist sisterhood is undermined by other complex dynamics of race, ethnicity and class. While the black women Tambu meets in *Nervous Conditions* contribute to the development of her feminist consciousness, the white women she encounters in *The Book of Not* undermine her. The privileged, colonialist, white, middle-class nuns have good intentions in extending their charity to Tambu, offering her a scholarship to study at Sacred Heart, but racism spoils the development and empowerment potential the project could have yielded. In *Feminist Theory: from Margin to Center* (1984), bell hooks explains that to express solidarity "we must have a community of interests, shared beliefs and goals around which to unite, to build Sisterhood" (64). The desire to empower intelligent black women could have been the basis to forge sisterhood but, as Schmidt in a different context notes, "Egged on by a racist gender ideology that vilified African women, European women starkly demonstrated how…sisterhood failed to cross racial lines" (181). Black and white students cannot bond because they stay in separate dorms, using separate toilets. The discourse of dirt the headmistress, Sister Emmanuel, uses about toilets hinders black and white students from relating.

However, some "small flowerings of unhu" (Dana, "Small Flowerings of Unhu"), are portrayed when Ntombi shows Tambu her results, Tracey asks how they did, and another white girl suggests they show their results on the count of three: "One-two-three! Tracey's streaky hair fell over Ntombi's plaits as [they] peered over each other's hands to see what the other was holding" (150). Tracy and Ntombi's hair mingles and their hands meet, and they share the recognition of themselves in the other through common achievement. In this scene the potential to transcend years of racial beliefs and racial sisterly bonding is implied in the harmonious contact of the girls after receiving their O-level results. But, Tambu is torn apart by the possibility that she has achieved higher results than all of them, and simultaneously terrified that she might have failed, and responds by walking away. Internalising racism and the quest for achievement make her fail to respond to the offer of companionship by Ntombi, Tracy and the other white girls.

Dangarembga brings a new development to Zimbabwean literature: writing of an elite class of black women isolating themselves from ordinary women. At the advertising house, Tambu snubs the extended hand of friendship by Pedzi, a young woman emulating her as a model and sister (212-214). The lies on which her superiority complex is founded are evident in her feigned ignorance of high-density life, preferring her address to be in the Avenues (214). She misses an opportunity to bond with Belinda the typist by defrauding a man who finally steals her concept. Tambu fails to bond and form an alliance with other women, because she thinks she is more educated and they are lower class. Ironically, it is educated middle-class women who speak for those women who are looked down upon. At the University of Zimbabwe Tambu fails to bond with her ex-classmate Ntombi, who is Ndebele, and Ntombi ignores Tambu because she is a Shona, and belonging is along ethnic lines, even for the educated. The complexity of feminist intersection theory is depicted in the different dynamics that cast Tambu as a lone figure. She has no community of women, friends or associates to support her emotionally.

Dangarembga criticizes elitist development projects by philanthropists which are not empowering but dehumanizing women, creating a dependency syndrome. African women have quarrelled with the imposed agendas of development by donors, and argue that development projects must be rooted in the indigenous (Nnaemeka "Nego-feminism"). In Tambu's case, in *Nervous Conditions* she is creative enough to plant maize and sell it to fund her schooling. But Babamukuru and the white nuns' philanthropic projects disempower and silence her, while destroying her creativity. They aim to shape her into an example of colonial womanhood. The white nuns' charities are what Muponde refers to as "witchcraft gifts.…that] are powerful, enslaving and dehumanising" (2008: 167). His statement is proven right by the illiterate village woman, Tambu's mother. She is self-reliant, and has a thriving viable commercial tomato garden, no one steals from her and she is not afraid of Babamukuru, the patriarch. Muponde and Odhiambo rightly note that she "is the first woman in Zimbabwean literature, to consistently denounce the self-importance of the educated elite" (2008: 167). Through Tambu's mother, Dangarembga illustrates that in the Zimbabwean context, land is an economic issue, as well as one of justice. Kitchen gardening is a viable development project for African women because it provides food for their families and they can sell any surplus. Maiguru's garden is a symbol of hope for women (182, 196), and restores her dignity and self-respect. Rine rightly notes that she embodies *unhu-ubuntu* because her flourishing garden is a non-profit project, providing aesthetic beauty and food for the community (Small Flowerings of *Unhu*" 54-63). In *Going Home* Lessing comments on the self-confidence which black women got from successful co-operative garden projects, which economically empowered them to support their children (260-61). Black women's productive use of the land in the novel challenges claims that only white, mostly, male farmers can productively utilize land. The text illustrates women's complex relationship with the land, revising the female relationship

to land imagined by Vera's women in *Without a Name* and *Under the Tongue*, who are not connected to the land and reject it. Dangarembga re-interprets the Zimbabwean socio-political situation within the dominant nationalist ideological frame from a black indigenous feminist perspective.

5.4 Liberated genders?

Feminists have argued that nationalist liberation movements have mobilised women to fight in liberation wars, particularly in Africa, but in the aftermath women have been side-lined, marginalised, re-domesticated, "dismembered" and used as symbols for various nationalist projects (Boehmer, *Stories* 1991; Samuelson, *Remembering* 2007). In response, feminist discourse has aimed to critique the grand narratives of nationalist historiography, and render women and their contributions visible (Samuelson, 2007; Lyons, *Guns* 2004). In *The Stone Virgins*, Vera seeks to subvert the internal systems of nationalist power in Zimbabwean politics, dismantling the nationalist grand narrative of heroes embedded in the successive ZANU-PF *chimurenga* discourses. Vera unsettles the masculinised women's archive of Nehanda, Teurai Ropa Mujuru, honorary men and the "Father of the nation" (Bul-Christiansen, "Mai Mujuru" 88) image, which does not honour ordinary demobilised female ex-combatants. She writes new tributes to the ordinary ex-guerrilla women and daughters of Nehanda/Charwe who fought on the war front in the struggle, only to be excluded from national history. She also muddies nationalist hegemonic narratives by inserting new pieces of the history of contemporary heroic civilian women who have weathered the storm of *gukurahundi*. In *The Stone Virgins*, Vera seeks to unsettle and displace the grand narrative of male nationalist heroes, inscribing the image of liberated female heroes in the nation. I argue that Vera re-creates liberated genders in the post colony, but represents the fragility of liberation in a nation governed by violent authoritarian heterosexual leaders. I posit that Vera begins the process of creating a more human new man, who acts in solidarity with women, as the kind of man who can work with women to rebuild Zimbabwe. I propose that Vera uses the horrific Matebeleland massacres as a discursive space to recreate masculinity and theorise human interdependency.

The Stone Virgins revisits Zimbabwe's transitional moment from war to peace, paying particular attention to the Matebeleland civil war in Matebeleland, in the Kezi rural lands. Thandabantu store links Kezi and Bulawayo, and during the war Kezi is a functioning society, with Thandabantu store as the social centre, while at independence Thandabantu store is the locus of victory celebrations. In the early 1980s *Gukurahundi*, Kezi is a "naked cemetery where no one is buried and everyone is betrayed" (143), and the destruction of Thandabantu is a symbol for the desecration of human life. The horrific scene foreshadows the suspension of ethnic and racial

reconciliation and women's liberation in the post colony. Masunungure rightly notes that *Gukurahundi* "is the buckle that connects the violent side of the armed liberation struggle to the violent side of independent Zimbabwe. The philosophy filtered from the path to the state reaching maturation in the form of the Third *Chimurenga* from February 2000. *Gukurahundi* is now an embedded mindset in the party/state…." (156, cited in Dodgson-Katiyo 115).

Thandabantu promised independence and restored hope for the future in young women like Nonceba and Thenjiwe, as indicated in the first epigraph. They are inspired by the daughters of Nehanda/Charwe, the demobilised female ex-guerrillas "sit[ting] on empty crates, like men" (51). The demobilised women guerrillas "became the ultimate embodiment of freedom. They made independence sudden and real….From this veranda, independence could be watched like the sun in the distance" (120). The demobilised women guerrillas wear "camouflage long past the ceasefire, walking through Kezi with their heavy bound boots. The women's "clothing [is] a motif of rock and tree….their long sleeves folded up along the wrist" (50-51). The returning women warriors' deportment, masculinised combat uniform and sitting in places usually occupied by men are indicative of gender transgression, creatively muddying the new nation. The image of demobilised women guerrillas depicts confident women unapologetically claiming equality with men because they deserve it after fighting on the war front. Their posture and their war credentials disqualify them from being potential sexual partners for male civilians. They are evidence of women's participation in the liberation struggle, disturbing the still waters of the male nationalist narrative. Through a critical feminist representation, *The Stone Virgins* recuperate and inscribe empowered, independent, female guerrilla heroes in the nationalist grand narrative.

The men who did not go to war are at a loss as to how to relate to the female war veterans. The Bulawayo men look at the demobilised female guerrillas with curious eyes, knowing they are "beings they could greet with care and due respect" (53). But they lean even further from them, afraid to be contaminated or dirtied by women who have blood on their hands. The image foreshadows the future gender tensions in independent Zimbabwe. Driver and Samuelson rightly note that the image of the returning female warriors always standing apart from the community symbolically depicts the limits of the liberation war and liberation itself ("History's Intimate Invasions" 112). Even though the female war veterans have been instrumental in making independence history, they have also been targeted by nationalist history "which has, up to now, in the reality of present-day Zimbabwe" focused on male heroes, "as contemporary Zimbabweans fail to honour the military women other than memorialisation of Nehanda" (Driver and Samuelson 112), who has now been domesticated, with a maternity wing at Parerenyatwa Hospital named after her.

Nyamubaya also captures the limited liberties and the marginalisation of female war veterans' contributions in her poem: "Once upon a time/ There was a boy and a girl/ Forced to leave their home/ by armed robbers/ The boy was independence/ The girl was freedom/ Independence came/ But Freedom was not there" (1980). Freedom was washed away into the gutters of history, so that she could not contaminate the "good women" by her unfeminine history. Vera sums up the non-recognition of women's war contributions on the front line at independence in an interview: "At that time (early 80s) women were coming back from the armed struggle and people were not even recognising that they had gone …. But there's this duplicity – people came back, and all the heroes are men all of a sudden" (Bryce 222). Vera redirects attention from mainstream versions of Zimbabwean history glorifying gallant sons, by reflecting on how the patriarchal nationalist "grand narrative of heroism and sacrifice" (Muchemwa, "Biras, Galas, State Funerals") has washed away female ex-combatants' heroic achievements into oblivion.

Bulawayo men wonder, "Did they [female demobilised guerrillas] kill doves, if so, how?" (54). The question depicts the men's anxiety and fear of the new woman emerging from the war. A dove is a symbol of peace, representing femininity that is submissive, fragile and domesticated. But killing the dove symbolically represents the death of patriarchal femininity, which is femininity as defined by men, hence implying the death of peace between these masculinised women and men. Bulawayo men find the idea of female freedom fascinating for a while, but they realise they have nothing in common with such women. They also realise that they are watching a moment in history that will not last: "They panic, knowing there will never be a time like this again and the next time they see these women they will no longer be these women at all, and no moment like this will continue to exist" (54-55). The quotation implies that the women will be re-domesticated. Samuelson argues that female ex-guerrillas of liberation armies, specifically Umkhonto we Sizwe [MK] and the armed wing of the African National Congress [ANC], experienced the same treatment in post-apartheid South Africa "as the return to the normalcy of peace…demand[s that] women warriors…retreat into the private sphere, to become again, as it were 'women' ("The Disfigured Body" 840). While civilian men looked at the demobilised guerrilla female freedom fighters with awe and shied away from them, male nationalist leaders were anxious to re-domesticate ex-guerrilla women.

The demobilised female guerrillas coming from the war are cast as lone figures, not displaying a united front with demobilised male guerrillas. Hence, patriarchal nationalists and male civilians' anxiety about liberated femininity displayed by female freedom fighters and filtering into civilian women triggered the national backlash against women during the dramatic "operation clean-up" in October 1983 instituted by the post-colonial nationalist government of Mugabe, using a pre-independence vagrancy law to drive out women considered to be dirty, immoral and prostitutes

from the city. In *Shemurenga: The Zimbabwean Women's Movement 1995-2000*, Essof gives a nuanced account of this operation, explaining that it was fuelled by endless media reports of school-girl pregnancies, prostitution, divorce and baby-dumping, all of which were blamed on women for their moral decadence, feminism and foreign influences (36). In the crackdown on the city, about 6000 women or girls walking alone at night were taken off the streets, out of hotels and public spaces like theatres, and placed in temporary prisons or in open spaces when the prisons were full. They were held until they presented marriage certificates or proof of employment, and those who did not have these papers were sent for rural resettlement. The crackdown happened at the same time as the *gukurahundi* massacres were taking place. The destruction of Tandabantu symbolises the fragility of Zimbabwean independence and women's independence.

In the aftermath, young civilian women place "blind faith in the future" (Driver and Samuelson 102). Driver and Samuelson note that *The Stone Virgins* "represents diametrically opposed female groups, with whom Zimbabwean men stand in an asymmetrical relation, depending on whether they themselves are military or non-military" (109). Unlike the highly politicised female ex-combatants, young civilian women choose conventional femininity. They "think they can cure all the loneliness in a man's arms….With their immaculate thighs and their tender voices and unblemished skin they will make a new sun rise and set so that yesterday is forgotten" (50). The quotation implies that they think they can heal the damaged, traumatised ex-combatant men with their sexuality. In essence, they worship them and choose to offer tenderness to these men, to be home-makers and producers of the nation. The young civilian women desire "to be appreciated, to be loved till the sun sets, to be adored like doves" (48), having chosen patriarchal femininity and peace with men. They accept subservient positions and are protective of "men who carry that lost look in their eyes…not at all like what they imagine heroes to be [as] these men…have a hard time looking straight at a woman" (48). The women take the responsibility of nurturing the traumatised damaged male war veterans who cannot answer their unspoken question, "Did you kill a white man?" (48). The authorial voice ridicules and parodies the celebration of non-existent male heroes, because "the country needs heroes, and flags, and festivities, and the notion of sacrifice" (48). The novel critiques idealised images of the liberation male hero, exposing the cracks that remain hidden in the narratives.

The image of the liberated independent female hero is brought into the post-colonial nation by young civilian women like Nonceba and Thenjiwe, who aspire to consolidate the new gender relations heralded by independence. Thenjiwe deconstructs the trope of a respectable chaste submissive woman, replacing it with a strong instinctual erotic and sexually-assertive woman. Women take up the politics of sexuality and the body, as civilian post-colonial female subjects

negotiate their desire for men, and claim their new sexual freedom. In a different context, Musila engages with how Vera "imagines love as [an] oppositional site that counters the limited notions of freedom as defined by nationalist historiography and colonial modernity" ("Beyond the Frame of History" 4). In Zimbabwean culture a woman cannot affirm sexual desire without being labelled a loose woman or prostitute (Carolyn Martin Shaw, "Mothers, Others, and Lovers"), but independence opened up possibilities for the exercise of sexual freedom. Young women are "the freest women on earth with no pretence.…They have no desire to be owned, hedged in, claimed, but to be appreciated, to be loved till the sun sets ." (48). Thenjiwe is Vera's most positive treatment of female sexuality: "A woman can admit her own sexual desire; it can be met by that of a man…and their union can affirm difference" (Shaw, "Mothers, Others, and Lovers" 259). Thenjiwe is the post-colonial version of the rebellious Lucia in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, Vera's Zandile, Getrude in *Butterfly Burning* and Martha Quest in Lessing's *Children of Violence* series. Thenjiwe is not ashamed of her desire, and seduces Cephas the historian, a man she met at Thandabantu store. She lures him to her home, and they have passionate sex.

Thenjiwe believes it is right to desire sex and passionately enjoy it because independence is the beginning of the future.

> She has a lot to forget so this is alright. She has no idea now, or ever, that some of the harm she has to forget is in the future, not in the past, and that she would not have enough time in the future to forget any of the hurt. Time is as necessary for remembering as it is for forgetting. Even the smallest embrace of pain needs time larger than a pause, the greatest pause requires an eternity, and the greatest hurt a lifetime. A lifetime is longer than eternity: an eternity can exist without human presence. (31-32)

But the authorial voice prefigures the return of a heavy storm to flush out unconventional women, foreshadowing the murder of Thenjiwe. There have been numerous controls over female sexuality in traditional society (Seidman et al. "An Examination of Intimacy") hence sexuality is inscribed as a political issue for women who have been denied that freedom by the patriarchy.

Thenjiwe's relationship with Cephas is not defined by normative heterosexual gender roles because she has agency. Thenjiwe is in control of the relationship, "She must have recognised him the way he had recognised her except he had attached his future to hers, instantly, and she had not" (35). When she loses interest in Cephas she sends him away. There have been different critiques on why Thenjiwe sends him away (Ranger, "History has its Ceiling" 207). Graham, *Land and Nationalism*) argues that she suffers the violence of nationalist discourse and her rootedness is emblematic of local or ethnic identity, implying that she sends him away because of

tribalism. My reading is that she desires more in life than Cephas can give her. When she finds a sweet seed of the *muzhanje* (an indigenous fruit found in Manicaland and Mashonaland) in Cephas's pocket, she wonders if he can truly love her the way she wants. The seed represents her senses: "it recalls the past, history, and memory; it takes her imagination elsewhere" (Shaw, "Mothers, Others, and Lovers" 256). In an interview, Vera states that women should aim

> To arrive – where? At that fine space where you are completely free of that domination, in your act and what you say. It takes a long time for a woman to see that; that is the place that she could aim towards and in fact reach. And when you have reached it, to find a most unexpected pleasure. (Primorac, "The Place of the Woman" 378)

Thenjiwe is probably influenced by her aunt Sihle, who has had four children with Ndabenhle Dlodlo, but refuses to be married or to leave her village, and go and stay with him, because she does not believe in being trapped in romantic love (102). Like Martha in *Martha Quest* and A *Proper Marriage*, Tambu in *Nervous Conditions*, Mazvita in *Without a Name* and Phephelaphi in *Butterfly Burning*, Thenjiwe's desire is directed somewhere, out there. But, instead of her being able to celebrate her new-found freedom her aspirations turn into cruel hope, as independence promises are swept away by *Gukurahundi*.

The Stone Virgins illustrates how sisterly bonds can be the bedrock for survival in a violent masculine world. The filial bond between Thenjiwe and Nonceba mirrors a mother-daughter relationship because they grew up motherless. Thenjiwe takes the mothering role, looking after Nonceba's needs, for example when she goes to boarding school (126). Orbach and Eichenbaum state that for young women "Female friendships have taken on enormous significance and prominence….For many women, intimate relationships with women friends, sisters, aunts and co-workers are bedrock of stability in their lives" (cited in Lynda Gichanda Spenser, *Writing Women* 17-18). Thenjiwe states that "Nonceba, though different, is also her, Thenjiwe. … her sister nearer than her own shadow, which is her own breath flowing into her body" (42). The statement confirms Elizabeth Abel's analysis of female friendship as a mingling of two souls "as almost to create one person out of two" (415, cited in Spenser 18). The two sisters are interdependent, as reflected in Thenjiwe identifying herself with Nonceba. Thenjiwe can only be whole with Nonceba, even though they are different. Thenjiwe is an instinctual person, and a free-spirit who dies young. In contrast, Nonceba "is patient like a mantis, who has no sudden impulses, slow and careful in everything" (42). She is very stable, and these attributes enable Nonceba to get an education, and become a teacher. Independence also enables Phephelaphi to achieve her dreams and aspirations of having a profession in *Butterfly Burning*.

The sisterly bond between Nonceba and Thenjiwe is unbreakable. Cephas' dream about Thenjiwe's hip bone and his pledge to save her hip bone if she died (39-40) is fulfilled when he saves Nonceba. The hip bone metaphor probably refers to the bones of Nehanda that refuse to be buried, but keep on rising to inspire different struggles. Vera, invokes the mythical Nehanda through the hip bone to symbolically enable Thenjiwe to be a mythical figure whose spirit is present in Cephas and Nonceba's life. Thenjiwe says "before he occupied all the places in [Thenjiwe's] mind Nonceba, her sister, had already been holding her mind quietly and forever" (42). Thenjiwe is spiritually present in Nonceba and Cepha's relationship (160). Driver and Samuelson note that their spiritual bond is symbolic of Nehanda's bones that keep rising through the voice of Thenjiwe and the different spirit mediums, including Vera, "resisting the official memorialisation that would fix them in stone" (112). Nationalists like Sibaso the former guerrilla turned dissident's claim that the iconic Nehanda protects him with her bones (107). Sibaso invokes Nehanda's spirit to inflict violence on women and children in the *gukurahundi* violence.

Writing *The Stone Virgins* from a post-2000 third *chimurenga* perspective, Vera tries to make sense of the violent masculinities in post-colonial Zimbabwe by revisiting the past transitional moment and the first decade of independence. Vera draws attention to the male war hero Sibaso, an ex-combatant who is now a dissident. Sibaso "has lived to tell many illicit versions of the war, to recreate the war" (73), and with "perfect truth which sounds exactly like a well-constructed lie" becomes dangerous to women when he realises that "history has its ceiling" (74). "This is his purge. He is almost clean. He seems to have a will, an idea which only he can execute. Of course, this idea involves desecration, the violation of kindness." (74) The desecration is recorded on Nonceba's hospital card: "There is a staccato narration…inflicted as by a sharp object…could be a blade…victim did not see the instrument…grievous harm…lips cut off…urgent surgery required…skin graft" (165). The text reflects an historical tributary of male violence on women's bodies, flowing into the history of the nation. Nonceba's hospital card describes what Sibaso did in slicing off her lips. The card seems to denounce the senseless violence against women, recording the level of violence and disfigurement done to innocent women by egoistic and cruel men who make women's bodies sites of their power struggle by inflicting harm. Vera seems to be indicting male nationalists who continuously fail to protect innocent women.

Vera uses the image of a hunter spider that devours its partner and rolls it into fine paste to court the next partner (76) to argue for male transformation. Sibaso says, "during the war, there are two kinds of lovers, the one located in the past, and dead, the one in the future, living and more desirable" (76). The devouring spider is symbolic of violent masculinity running the post-colonial nation, silencing dissent by using coercive state violence, emanating from a patriarchal notion "that love cannot be founded on mercy, but that mercy can be founded on love" (76). This

gendered violence hides behind traditional African masculinity and is reinforced by political intolerance: "[t]he past a repast, the future a talisman" (76). Vera cautions that this cannibalistic man "belong[s] to a continent in disarray" (76). From an African feminist perspective, Vera is aware that it is men who have denied women a role in history and the nation, so their co-operation and involvement are important to restore and rebuild the nation.

In *The Stone Virgins*, Vera deploys the Matebeleland massacres as a discursive space to reimagine an alternative "model of…desirable masculinity" (Morrell, "Youth, fathers and masculinity" 85). This model of masculinity stresses "tolerance, peace, democracy, domestic responsibility, sensitivity and introspectio…ushering in a new form of masculinity" (Morrell 85). While his study focuses on South African men and masculinity, the "new man" would also be desirable in the Zimbabwean context. This study focuses on the constitution of the "new man" through Cephas, a man who can rebuild the nation together with women. While critics have analysed Cephas's relationship with Thenjiwe (Musila "Beyond the Frame"), his role as an historian in rebuilding the past (Ranger "History has a ceiling") and how he reacts to history in a different way from Sibaso (Driver and Samuelson "History's Intimate"), I will focus on the characteristics of the new man envisioned by Vera. Gender and masculinity theorists argue that masculinity is contingent, fluid and constantly reshaped by socio-historical, economic and political circumstances (Hearn and Morrell "Reviewing hegemonic masculinities", Morrell, "Of boys and men", Connell *Masculinities*). Morrel argues that "Masculinity is fluid, has been changing, and can be the object of social, political and personal work" ("Youth, fathers and masculinity" 85). He advocates that men should be included in "agendas for peace and democracy" (ibid. 84), because "the rights of women cannot be promoted without working with men" (ibid. 84).

Vera draws on African feminist ideology founded on the principles of interdependency, complementarity, responsibility, negotiation, and an autonomous link with humanistic principles (Nneameka 2003; Nfah-Abbenyi 1997; Davies and Graves 1986) to construct an ideal of African manhood. Vera positions herself within a feminist discourse of the ethics of *unhu-ubuntu*, to re-create Zimbabwean masculinity that protects women and children. Mangena's article "The Search for a Feminist Ethic: A Zimbabwean Perspective" calls for a redefinition of *unhu-ubuntu* ethics, to protect women from HIV/AIDS (18–30). Taking into account the Zimbabwean realities and environment, the theoretical foundation of *The Stone Virgins* is grounded in the cultural ideology of *unhu-ubuntu*, giving a literary-aesthetic performance of what it is, through Cephas, to sensitise men to the needs and rights of women, while lobbying for gender democracy. *The Stone Virgins* offers a discursive space to renegotiate for a reformed African masculinity embodying *unhu-ubuntu* ethical values.

Cephas's relationship with Nonceba "inaugurate[s] a world of gender equality" (Driver and Samuelson 114). Cephas has "authority without authoritarianism and [that] makes him a fascinating personification of the 'new man' Vera hopes Zimbabwe will have" (Paci, "The Representation" 340). Cephas is an historian working in the archives of the National Museums of Zimbabwe. He had a passionate affair with Thenjiwe, but left because she did not want a permanent relationship. He is not a vindictive and bitter man; he respects her right to choose. After reading about Thenjiwe's violent death and what happened to Nonceba during *Gukurahundi*, he weeps with sorrow and grief. He goes to Kezi to rescue Nonceba and help her heal. His love and attachment to Thenjiwe are an incentive to the nurturing love he has for Nonceba. He is a man who reaches out to women in need of help. The weeping man is a man who is in touch with masculine and feminine attributes, and appears to be a man who can work with women. Samuelson and Driver state that "When he met Nonceba, then, he was seeking penance" for his failure to protect Thenjiwe (164). They further assert that Cephas draws on memory to offer restoration to Nonceba, nursing her wounds and the wounds of his own heart and soul (ibid. 164). The new man has the ability to love deeply, the need to protect, and he acknowledges responsibility without blaming others.

Cephas Dube is not a spider that devours its partner. Cephas does not replace Thenjiwe with her sister: "The love of a dead sister: the love of a living sister. The love of both. He feels himself located between them….he need not abandon his yearning for Thenjiwe" (160-1). For Cephas and Nonceba, "The past…is much heavier than the present; it exists with absolute claim.…A delicate act of forgiveness; to be alive at all seems a betrayal. They should have saved her, even by their will alone" (155). Thus, Cephas draws on historical memory to reflect, to heal and to rebuild. Cephas's rebuilding of the beehive with tender branches touching, a beehive that can harbour a multitude of bees, "provide each a delicate task, each a shelter" (32), symbolising his inclusive nature, and his tenderness. He is a nurturing, loving, caring and passionate man. He symbolically builds a house for Nonceba, providing her "with a home, and a new life. She has no regrets [about] coming to the city" (154). The home is a refuge and a healing place. Cephas's flat has two bedrooms opposite each other and Nonceba sleeps in the other bedroom. Nonceba has claimed the space as hers, shown by the small things she has added to the room. The contents of the house and the neighbourhood are almost edenic, while the flat could be described as utopian – a perfect place to live. They do live peacefully and have become good friends.

Cephas presents an alternative masculinity, supportive of femininity. He represents better ways of loving: "[h]e wants to help, to sustain, not to contain" (Stone, "In the Bedroom" 169), in contrast to Fumbatha in *Butterfly Burning*. Cephas transcends regional and ethnic politics, loving Thenjiwe and Nonceba from Matebeleland, while he is from the Shona, sub ethnic group from

Manicaland. The text redefines the characteristics of an ideal African man as a reflective man who takes responsibility, is empathic, tender, passionate…compassionate and non-tribalist, with the ability to move the nation into the twenty-first century and enter partnerships with women.

The complex notion of interdependency is reflected through the relationship of Cephas and Nonceba. Steady states that "African patterns of feminism can be seen as having developed within a context that views human life from a total, rather than dichotomous and exclusive, perspective ("The Black Woman" 8). For women the male is not 'the other' but part of the human same. Each gender constitutes the critical half that makes the human whole. Neither sex is totally complete in itself. Each has and needs a complement, despite the possession of unique features of its own" (8). Vera illustrates a need for the interdependency of women and men in times of adversity and crisis: Cephas and Nonceba are a couple "whose [f]riendship or love is shown to be dependent not only on women's maternal service and tenderness towards men, but now also on male service towards women and male tenderness, as well as on individual independence and freedom for both women and men within the love relationship" (Drive and Samuelson 114-5). Vera defines a new heterosexual relationship which does not find fulfilment only in the practice of heterosexual erotic sex, but also in an intimacy which represents new historical possibilities of gender equality. An egalitarian masculinity is imagined through Cephas. While, he is not convincingly developed as a character, he functions as an ideological instrument in Vera's project of reimagining an ideal hopeful future for Zimbabwe.

The Stone Virgins encourages women to steadfastly hold on to their hopes, even in the midst of the raging storm of violence. The novel attempts to lift female survivors of the Matebeleland *Gukurahundi* out of the gutters of history, celebrating their heroism. Nonceba goes through many operations to heal the aftermath of the violence of *Gukurahundi* on women's bodies and psyche: "grievous harm … lips cut off … urgent surgery required … skin graft" (165). Neither the brutal male violence nor the painful surgery distracts Nonceba from her attachment to the independence promises of social inclusion, citizenship, gender liberation, economic independence, dignity and happiness. The nature of such promises is analogous to what Berlant, in a different context, has referred to as "cruel optimism". In *The Stone Virgins*, nurturing the attainment of these promises within a nation conceived in violence, with women perceived as dirty, constitutes "cruel hope". Cruel hope figures as a refusal to let go of a hopeful investment in a better future that may well be slipping away, in this context under *gukurahundi* massacres and violence. While one might view her hope as courageous, aspirational and brave, I read it as cruel in the sense that it is impossible to fulfil in a nation-state managed by violent nationalist masculinity that has turned against its own people. It is a negative affect, but Vera mobilises it as a possible resource for agency. In *The Stone Virgins*, the aesthetic enactment of cruel hope by Nonceba is politically energizing,

sustaining her optimism, and giving her sustenance against strong negative currents. Cruel hope becomes a form of agency, mobilising and energizing Nonceba, and African women in general, not to give up on their aspirations, to continue fighting for survival, healing and happiness. This provides a conclusion to the discussion of "cruel optimism" introduced in the first lines of this Chapter.

Nonceba's aspirational hope enables her to chart possible escape routes from the violent waters choking and engulfing her. She is not trapped by her fear, and she does not allow her fear to cast a pall over all men as being monolithically violent and savage. She engages with Cephas and connects spiritually with his hurt and despair (152). Her inner will and spirituality are depicted in the trope of flowers. Nonceba grew up being very spiritual, "gather[ing] the most beautiful flowers from the river and spread[ing] them all over the house" (42) (see aspects of gynocriticism in Dodgson-Katiyo *Emerging Perspectives on Yvonne Vera*). Her aesthetic insight and love of nature are significant in her healing process. She dreams of the dead Thenjiwe giving her flowers in hospital (85) as she fights for survival. In Bulawayo, the scent of the flowers from Joan the Florist flower shop and the flower vendors around the City Hall soothes her soul. The roses she brings to the flat revive her senses and nurture her spirit and soul. The act of preserving the large yellow rosebuds with salted water is like salving her wounds. She arranges them in the glass vase, and in a day they open and the room is filled with the fresh smell of roses, a pleasant smell. She stands for a long time looking at the flowers (147- 155).

Nonceba sustains herself and does not let go of her hope, focusing on the small positive things that independence has brought. The recently employed bank tellers and trainee managers newly graduated from the Economics Department of the University of Zimbabwe at Standard Chartered Bank, the black mannequins in the windows of Edgars, black customers going into the shop and black girls recently enrolled in the 'A' schools of Montrose and Evelyn High are all evidence that despite all the challenges facing the post colony, independence cannot be reversed. Cephas's flat in the city is also evidence of the possibilities opened up by independence. Nonceba steadfastly holds on to a glimmer of hope in the midst of unfulfilled promises: she realises that with patience, will and determination she can turn the tide.

Hope is the foundation Nonceba builds on, redirecting the waves in the direction she wants. She makes a conscious decision to carve out her own space in the post-colonial state, as symbolised by her act of selecting a picture of yellow daisies, deciding on the exact spot to hang it (153). "[She] keeps her hair plaited in neat rows, beautiful and precise" (158), "[h]er movements and speech are unhurried" (158), she finds a job on her own, and turns down Cephas's job offer (156). She manages to define herself as an autonomous subject. She is brave and "endure[s] the worst",

going for operation after operation (164). But in the midst of it all she "has an astounding capacity for joy" (157), and as the story ends Cephas watches her happiness unfold (160, 162). She jokes with him (162) and "her strength often amazes him" (163). She manages to reverse the tide: for her, at least, violent, ethnic patriarchy is defeated.

Her independence grows, as depicted in her reflection about her childhood fears: "When I was a child I feared finding a perfect hiding place in which I would never be found. I imagined being alone, undiscovered, lost. I did not even pause to think that all I needed was to walk out of my hiding place if no one found me" (162). The statement suggests that the pain and suffering have been a journey of self-discovery. She makes a conscious decision to take charge of her life and to reshape her future. Her lived experience becomes the archive of her rising feminist consciousness. Cruel hope becomes her agency and opens a possibility for possible healing. As the novel ends she is a free independent woman walking in the city. Nonceba is the female figure of the future: a survivor, a fighter, a strong independent African woman, a hero.

5.5 Conclusion

Critics enthuse over the quality of Dangarembga's work but are hesitant to examine the gynocentric class dynamics in the Zimbabwean literary canon. Dangarembga deals with the formation of an elite class of women who seem to separate themselves from the common women we find in Vera's fiction. However, through *unhu-ubuntu*, Dangarembga establishes the conditions under which a multiracial sisterhood can flourish and develop, as reciprocity and recognition of the others' humanity. Dangarembga's story is open-ended, as the frustrated, disappointed, angry Tambu fails to realise her hopes and dreams in a racist postcolonial state. On the other hand, Vera participates in the literary reconfiguration of gender at independence, infusing different kinds of post-colonial female subjectivity and female heroes into the nation-state. The resolution of the story is optimistic that social reconciliation is possible if men transform themselves and appreciate the interdependency of human beings. Through Cephas and Nonceba, Vera deploys unhu-ubuntu to create a new man and a new woman who are interdependent in an experimental kind of relationship which has respect for "the other" and an openness to whatever may arise in their lives.

Chapter 6: The Third Chimurenga? Gendered Political crisis

Elegy is about the will of the people to survive – their resilience, sense of humour, determination to survive (Petina Gappah).[50]

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on post-2008 female-authored narratives representing the post-2000 Zimbabwe socio-political crisis. Women writers return to the everyday and the ordinary as sources of creativity, portraying it as simultaneously a site of constraint and a matrix of creative resistance to Zimbabwean post-colonial patriarchy. This is Lefebvre's notion of "the everyday life," which incorporates mundane activities such as eating, sleeping, shopping, dressing, working and home-making, including the intricate rituals, taboos, etiquette, performances and other systematic activities that encompass and define them in analysing the impact of the gendered socio-political crisis. Lefebvre treats everyday life as an interconnectivity of social, political and economic factors, and suggests that the singularity of the everyday event resonates with national, global, social and psychic desire (*Critique of the Everyday Life* 57). I analyse the literary representation of the Zimbabwean will "to survive – their resilience" (Gappah 2009) – focusing on the quality of their everyday life experiences and coping strategies during those times. In Chapter 2 I discussed the rebellious woman image constituted in the colonial home, while in Chapter 3 I focused on the representation of liberated women and men in the home and the nation. This chapter analyses images of the resilient woman and vulnerable man in their crisis-torn homes and nation. The aim of the chapter is to demonstrate how gender relations were transformed during the Zimbabwe crisis, and how the crises re-constitute a modern post-colonial subjectivity. I argue that while the crisis has had a serious negative impact on various sectors of Zimbabwean society, it has also created a space for women to forge new gendered identities, and to intervene in the politics of masculinity to renegotiate and challenge unfeeling African masculinities. I read Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006), Gappah's *An Elegy for Easterly* (2009), Phiri's *Highway Queen* (2010) and Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) through the metaphor of disaster and the trope of dirt and and re-naming, finally, the opportunities for change.

This chapter has three sections. In the first section "The materiality of the everyday," I discuss how women have been forced to make "choice-less" choices to access their daily material needs in *The Uncertainty of Hope* and *Highway Queen*. In the second section, "Displacement: man-

[50]Interview with Faith Mkwesha at *Le Quartier Francais*, Franschhoek, South Africa, 16 May 2009. See Appendix B of this thesis. In the epigraph she refers to her collection of short stories, *An Elegy for Easterly* (2009).

made disaster versus natural disaster," I adopt Kopf's concept of "man-made disaster" to analyse the intersections of the *Murambatsvina* "man-made" disaster and the HIV/AIDS virus natural disaster in *The Uncertainty of Hope*, *Highway Queen*, "The Elegy for Easterly" and *We Need New Names*. I engage with how this crisis unfolds, how it is managed, the deaths caused by it, the resulting internal and external displacement. I also analyse the experience of men and women travelling to the future for greener pastures in the diaspora in *We Need New Names*. Finally, the section on "Vulnerability and agency" analyses women's agency and man's vulnerability, as materialised by the different crises.

Speaking from a feminist perspective, Rose stresses the importance of focusing on "Women and Everyday Spaces" (*Feminism and Geography* 17), arguing that the "everyday is the arena through which patriarchy is (re)created – and contested" (ibid 17), and in the texts under study the feminine dominates, privileging the domestic space. While the protagonists in *The Uncertainty of Hope*, *Highway Queen* and *We Need New Names* are also found on the streets, they always return to the private sphere. Drawing on Lefebvre's notion of the everyday as theorized in his critique of everyday modernity in his Critique of Everyday Life (1947), it is clear how "public political life has penetrated private life and vice versa" (4), in the texts under study. The movement of the characters between the public and the private in their daily routines enables an analysis of how Zimbabwean literary women and men's everyday lives are disrupted, how the familiar routines are transformed into conscious hard choice by the gendered crisis. Lefebvre's reading of everyday life in his "theory of tactics and strategies" is applied to critique the reality represented in the texts, and will suggest what might be transformed and changed in people's lives by the Zimbabwean authorities. In this study I deploy Lefebvre's critique to analyse what has been done or not done by the Zimbabwean authorities to transform people's everyday lives, and what strategies the characters are deploying to survive the crisis in which they find themselves.

Three Zimbabwean novels, *The Uncertainty of Hope*, *Highway Queen* and *We Need New Names*, as well as the short story "An Elegy for Easterly", document how the dominant male aesthetic crumbles as masculinity is deflated by disaster, but the response of the female characters is to re-create themselves and fashion new forms of survival and resistance more adequate to the task of attending to everyday life. Ben Highmore explains that in "the everydayness of everyday life" the most travelled journey can become a dead weight, the most inhabited space a prison or a sanctuary – or it may bewilder, or give pleasure (1). The concept of everyday life provides a touchstone for analysing the quality of the everyday lives of marginalised people during the gendered Zimbabwean crisis. On another level, the concept enables Tagwira, Phiri, Gappah and Bulawayo, as literary women, to register and articulate their ordinary everyday experiences of the crisis.

The plot of *The Uncertainty of Hope* revolves around two women friends, Onai Moyo and Katy Nguni, who are mothers, wives and market women at the Mbare market. Tagwira revisits the Mbare Township setting that Lessing inaugurates in her short story "Hunger", while Vera celebrates Bulawayo's Makokoba Township in *Butterfly Burning*. Onai is married to Gari, who abuses her emotionally, physically and economically, and Katy is married to a responsible husband, John Nguni, who is faithful and provides for his family. Conflict becomes heated in Gari's family when he is retrenched and takes all his frustrations out on Onai. In Phiri's *Highway Queen*, human suffering and the will to survive are portrayed through Sophie Mumba and her husband, Stephen Mumba. Stephen has been the breadwinner, and when retrenched he becomes alcoholic and the family is rendered homeless. Everyday material needs pressurise Sophie to find work, buying and selling goods, and eventually engaging in the sex trade to provide her family with the basic necessities of life.

Gappah's short story, "An Elegy for Easterly" and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* focus on the double displacement of people caused by government so-called clean-up operations. "An Elegy for Easterly" celebrates their will to survive and ability to rebuild their lives on the rural farm where they have been settled by the government. They were cleared out of the city to prepare for Queen Elizabeth II of England's visit for the 1991 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Harare. The story focuses on their everyday survival tactics, and ends with their second sudden eviction. *We Need New Names* focuses on the life of Darling and her friends crossing different boundaries in search of food. Darling's father migrated to South Africa in search of greener pastures when his home was destroyed during government clean-up operations. He never returned, but he comes back when he falls sick. Darling emigrates to America, and the second part of the book focuses on her life in the diaspora. The discussion will focus on the everydayness of these marginalised people's lives.

There are two central but antagonistic interpretations of the origins and nature of the post-2000 Zimbabwe crisis. Robert Mugabe and the ZANU-PF government argue that the Zimbabwe crisis has been created by foreign imperialists determined to sabotage the government's black empowerment programmes, particularly the third *chimurenga* (violent land seizure programme).[51] The Mugabe / ZANU-PF narrative is that the Zimbabwean third *chimurenga* was the culmination of the previous liberation movements, and was meant to conclude the first and second *chimurenga* by finally recovering the land from the British settlers (see a spate of analysis on the Zimbabwe

[51] See, Zimbabwe's Casino Economy: Extraordinary Measures for Extraordinary Challenges; Robert Mugabe's and Robert Mugabe's

crisis).[52] By contrast, opposition voices, particularly the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), delineate it as a crisis of political governance and a struggle for democracy (Nyambi, *Nation in Crisis* 3; Chiumbu and Musemwa, "Crisis! What Crisis?"; Raftopoulos and Mlambo, *Becoming Zimbabwean*).[53] Some critics argue that the Zimbabwe crisis came to a climax because of the rejection of the 2000 referendum, and because the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) had overwhelmingly won the 2000 parliamentary elections and the 2002 presidential elections (Hammar et al. *Zimbabwe's Unfinished Business*, Raftopoulus, *Unreconciled Differences*). Zimbabwe had a world-record level of inflation for a country that was not at war. The official Zimbabwean dollar-kwacha exchange rate was 600% in 2009 before "dollarization", but it has been estimated to be more, and in 2007 it was about 1000% (Chan, *Zimbabwe Crisis* vii).[54] The Zimbabwe crisis is marked by a failure of the rule of law in government, abuse of state institutions, lawlessness sponsored by the state using extra-legal methods to deal with its enemies, impunity that protects government officials who violate the law, economic collapse and a general disregard for the human rights of Zimbabwean citizens.

I have titled this chapter "The third *chimurenga*?" to draw attention to how post-2008 disaster narratives contest and counter the third *chimurenga* narrative circulated by the authorities, archiving the real everyday experience of marginalized people and providing a counter-discourse to nationalist rhetoric on the Zimbabwean crisis. The question mark in the title of this chapter marks the contestation of the linear developments presented by the ZANU-PF *chimurengas* (Primorac, *The Place of Tears* 9), and challenges the post-2008 narratives under discussion, relating "complexly to the narrative of the Third *Chimurenga*" (Primorac and Mponde, *Versions of Zimbabwe* xv). The list of different crises supplied by Chiumbu and Muchaparara represent the areas with which the women authors in this study grapple: "the political conflict left in its wake [presented] various…crises, the majority of which were crises associated with resource

[52] See, H. Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land in Zimbabwe* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984) *The Land Question in Zimbabwe* (Harare: Sapes, 1995), J. Alexander. *The Unsettled Land: State-Making and the Politics of Land in Zimbabwe 1893-2003* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2006), A.S. Mlambo, "Land Grab or Taking Back Stolen Land: The Fast Track Land Reform Process in Zimbabwe in Historical Perspective", Compass, (July 2005), R. Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia* (London: Heinemann, 1977), R. Riddell, "Zimbabwe's Land Problem: The Central Issue", in *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe: Behind and Beyond Lancaster House,* ed. W. H. Morris-Jones (New Jersey: Frank Cass, 1980), 1-13, Rukuni, M. et al., *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Appropriate Agricultural Land Tenure Systems* (Harare: Government Printer, 1994).

[53]Alois Mlambo and Brian Raftopoulos, "The Regional Dimensions of Zimbabwe's Multi-layered Crisis: An Analysis" presented at Election Processes, Liberation Movements and Democratic Change in Africa Conference in Maputo, 8-11 April 2010. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni's "The Nativist Revolution and Development Conundrums in Zimbabwe"argues against a neo-liberal definition of the Zimbabwe crisis. See Brian Raftopoulos's argument on how the crisis in Zimbabwe manifested itself in *Becoming Zimbabwean*.

[54] Patrick Bond and Masimba Manyanya's book, *Zimbabwe's Plunge: Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism and the Search for Social Justice* (2003), discusses the economic dimension of the Zimbabwe crisis (2003)

scarcities…such as the water crisis, health crisis, monetary/cash crisis, fuel crisis, energy/electricity crisis, food crisis and the cholera crisis" (*Crisis!*, X). The third *chimurenga* narrative by the authorities represents the farm invasions as the final decolonisation of Zimbabwe, and silences any dissenting voices trying to bring to the fore the calamity of the crisis in everyday life. By contrast, women writers describe the crisis of everyday life as a priority in those narratives, in an attempt to rescue their existence from oblivion.

6.2 The materiality of the everyday [55]

The Uncertainty of Hope, *Highway Queen*, "An Elegy for Easterly" and *We Need New Names* represent the unmanageability of the everyday during the crisis. The texts depict the everyday realities of the crisis in marginalised townships and communities in their daily struggle to provide a decent livelihood for their families. I approach the everyday in the realm of the ordinary (Ndebele, "The Rediscovery of the Ordinary"), through treating it as a domain that is potentially extraordinary. I am more interested in how the materiality of the everyday affects the choices, decisions and practices of the characters. In the context of this study, materiality refers to the physiological, emotional, economic and psychological resources that one relies on daily to sustain a fulfilling life. Thus, I focus on the problems with a shortage of food, inflation, closure of companies, lack of government funding at universities, shortage of skilled practitioners like doctors, the collapse of the economy, human trafficking across borders, emigration, a flourishing informal trade, the devastation of marginalised township people's lives and the survival strategies people develop to cope with these. I argue that while male characters are immobilized by economic disenfranchisement and alienation from their gender role as providers, protectors and fathers, literary Zimbabwean women are being forced to make "choice-less" choices to provide the materiality of everyday needs for their families during the Zimbabwe crisis. I examine how gender relations and roles are transformed by the crisis, through more flexible definitions of the terms and roles of breadwinner, fatherhood and motherhood.

There have been different readings of Tagwira's debut award-winning novel, *The Uncertainty of Hope.*[56] While, there has not been a lot of scholarly discussion on the texts under study, I will draw attention to academic theses that have focused on this book. In *Narrating Gender and Danger in Selected Zimbabwe Writings on HIV and AIDS*, Chitando reads Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* as an HIV/AIDS novel focusing on infection (2011). In *Nation in Crisis:*

[55] I adopt and adapt Karen Barad's concept in "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. 28.3 (2003): 801-831.
[56] Winner of the National Arts Merit Award for Best First Work of Literary Fiction in 2008.

Alternative Literary Representations of Zimbabwe Post-2000, Nyambi reads that text as a "*Murambatsvina*" novel, focusing on displacement and how it provokes compassion (2013), while in *Imagining the City in Zimbabwean Literature: 1949 to 2009*, Muchemwa reads it as a narrative re-imagining the city by exhibiting various symptoms of urban disease (2013). This thesis reads *The Uncertainty of Hope* as a novel focusing on the unmanageability of everyday life for marginalised Zimbabwean post-colonial subjects and their families during the Zimbabwe crisis. Mlambo and Raftopoulos state that "what has been happening in the country since the turn of the millennium is a complex and inter-related multi-layered and pervasive catastrophes that can, perhaps, be described as a series of 'Zimbabwean crises', for no aspect of Zimbabwean existence escaped the deleterious effects of this phenomenon" (*Becoming Zimbabwean* 1). In order to understand the relationship between the individual characters and society, the best starting-point is the personal and the everyday life where the authorised and unauthorised activities and thoughts interconnect. Personal life and everyday family experiences provide a mirror of the social routines and social change in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

The Uncertainty of Hope is a "representation of the spectacle" that Ndebele analyses in black South African literature ("The Rediscovery" 31). Tagwira writes as a spectator watching the everyday spectacle unfold. The elements of the spectacle – the ramshackle township shanties, the highly oppressive government, the draconian laws, the depiction of poverty, the aggressiveness of the government, the display of violence and brutality – all represent lived reality in Zimbabwe. *The Uncertainty of Hope* opens with Onai, the protagonist, being awakened by dogs barking at the Harare gangs of thieves "prowling through the ramshackle labyrinth of Jo'burg Lines" (1) where she lives with her family. The chapter gives a detailed description of Gari's unsafe, poverty-stricken house, as well as the dilapidated furniture, invoking a gloomy and anxious atmosphere. With the "new breed of malicious intruders, assault was no longer a remote possibility" (2). Gari is absent, but, when he comes home, he accuses his wife of conniving with the burglars to steal the only valuable thing in the house – the black-and-white television set – and he beats her up. Daring thieves who steal in the presence of the owner, and assault anyone who tries to interfere with their stealing, can be read as symbolic of the broader familial and broader national challenges facing women and children in the home and nation, where father-figures default on their social role of protecting their families. Gari's abusive silencing techniques, such as physical beatings and emotional abuse by blaming the victim, reveal a national failure to provide food and security to the family and the nation.

Gari symbolically represents failed fatherhood because he does not provide for his family. Zimbabwe is a patriarchal society, and the Shona culture is very patriarchal. Musiyiwa and Chirere say that fatherhood is defined by conjugal and family responsibilities which are culturally

defined (*The Nature of Fatherhood* 156). They explain that "A man's ability to accomplish such responsibilities earns him the status of a good fatherhood from his wife and children and the community at large" (Fatherhood 156). Gari does not have the qualities of good fatherhood, because he does not provide economically for his family: even when he is working, he is a drunkard, philandering, absent from the home, and is a violent husband who beats his wife severely. Gari's character deteriorates when he is retrenched, as his employer moves to South Africa. He resorts to drinking and illicit affairs with women like Gloria and Sheila, whilst projecting his frustrations onto Onai. Thus, Gari represents failed fatherhood in the home and the nation.

The everyday commonplace activities are bound up with patriarchal power structures which limit and confine women. In Onai's case, domestic violence is triggered by her desire to do a dress-making course because of her intention to work and help improve their life. Gari forbids this, but Onai borrows money from her mother and enrols for the course. Gari views her actions as disobedience and becomes angry. From that day on he refuses to give her money for food or anything else, because she has "disobeyed him". In addition to financially abusing her, he also abuses her physically. Even though it is a criminal offence to beat a wife, Onai does not report Gari to the police, despite considerable evidence of the violence (5). She does not divorce him either, arguing: "Where would I go if l left Gari? I would simply be homeless, on top of everything else" (189). Onai assumes the identity of a battered wife because she needs shelter. Even though she has a dressmaking qualification she cannot get a job because companies are closing down. Tagwira's evocation of domestic violence shows how patriarchy thwarts women's economic independence, and how a quest to re-define one's identity by having a career is hindered in the context of Zimbabwe's post-2000 economic crisis.

Tagwira confronts cultural ideology as a political issue that also has an impact on women's subordination. Judith Butler's concept of performativity posits that meaning arises and is constituted through performance. Butler argues that "perfomativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (*Gender Trouble* xv). In Butler's account of gendered subjectivity, the maternal body and the maternal instinct are seen as constructed from within culture, and she questions whether "femaleness is really external to the cultural norms by which it is repressed" (*Undoing Gender* 93). She argues that we should pay attention to "those specific power relations by which the trope of the maternal body is produced" (ibid 92). In the Shona patriarchal culture to which Onai and Gari belong, they are gendered beings and are surrounded by cultural conceptions of masculinity and femininity that they are expected to follow. Wifehood and motherhood are institutions celebrated and controlled by

patriarchy and the women who act in complicity with patriarchy. Onai has been conditioned by her mother, MaMusara, who is her model of femininity, to believe that "Once you get in, you stay. Kugomera chaiko mwanangu…no matter what, how hard it gets. Always remember that a woman cannot raise a good family without a man by her side." (7). Onai "stayed and felt extremely proud that she was able to do so for her children. This was the true essence of a true African woman…perseverance in the face of all hardships, especially for the children. One always stayed for them." (6-7). Tagwira renegotiates the image of African women as models of perseverance circulating in culture, and questions cultural values that are dangerous to children and women (5, 10). Tagwira depicts that one never belongs in a house built according to patriarchal values. Onai is rendered homeless by her husband's brother Toro when Gari dies. He justifies dispossessing Onai and her children of their house on cultural grounds. It is culture that has socialised Onai to persevere in an abusive and unsustainable marriage, and it is also culture that renders her homeless. The text argues for a re-creation of this model of African womanhood that imprisons women and children in abusive and violent homes, or renders them homeless.

Tagwira represents the actuality of a multi-layered crisis that forces women to make "choiceless" choices. In a different context, Katrina Jungar and Elina Oinas argue that "women's decisions are formed within environments that restrict and influence subjects' choice and actions" ("Beyond Agency and Victimisation" 252). Drawing from their argument, this chapter defines "choice-less" choices as decisions influenced by the need to attain basic material needs that threaten human survival. The dysfunctional economy subjects women and children to high inflation, chronic shortages of basic food, electricity outages, closure of companies, daring thieves, endless struggles for basic physiological and material needs and many other daily challenges which confront them. Their "life had become one big obsession with obtaining food" (27), as basic commodities are hard to come by. Even children participated in food-hunting. Onai's daughter Ruva asks despairingly: "[A]ren't you tired of this life, Mum? Why can't we just walk into the shops and buy what we need, like we used to? Are we always going to be queuing for food and never getting enough?" (113). The gendered nature of the crisis is evident in the anxiety, distress and uncertainty it creates among women and children who run around in search of basic food-stuffs. The survival challenges represented in family homes are microcosms of what is happening in the whole country.

As the crisis reaches its peak the line between what is legal and illegal disappears. Many "Zimbabwean women flout[ing] socially and lawfully accepted norms to fend for their children" (82), and the gendered nature of the Zimbabwe crisis is depicted in Faith's reflections:

> She thought of her mother engaging in unlawful foreign-currency dealing to put her through university, and build a dream home. She thought of mainini Onai struggling to raise three children within an abusive marriage, of Melody trading her innocence for university fees and groceries. How far was she from promiscuity? She thought of mainini Onai's lodger, Sheila, a self-proclaimed ex-prostitute whose fear of hunger had been greater than her fear of AIDS. Even she had niggling suspicions about the man she loved, and his farm. Hadn't the promise of security been an initial attraction? Was Melody right in saying, "Blame the economy for forcing…me into a corner" (82).

Faith is Katy's only child, a highly analytical university graduate, and she embodies the authorial voice. Faith reflects on how the crisis is forcing her mother, Katy, her mother's friend Onai, her friend Melody, Sheila a lodger at Ona's house, and herself to make decisions based on economic survival. The extract above depicts how five different women have been forced by the economy to relinquish their moral principles by engaging in different immoral and illegal means to provide for their families.

The materiality of the everyday as depicted in this text turns every Zimbabwean into a criminal. Maxwell Kadenge states that "To survive the crisis, Zimbabweans devised a multiplicity of ways to earn a living…most of them illicit" ("Linguistic negotiation" 7). Zimbabweans created metaphors to describe "the largely illegal activities often engaged in for day-to-day survival, as well as the actions of profiteers" (Kadenge 144). The illegal vendors devised coping strategies to communicate, like kukiya-kiya which metaphorically means "unorthodox means of survival" (Kadenge 157). When her market stall is destroyed by the authorities, Onai resorts to *kiya-kiya* at filling stations, under constant threat of arrest by authorities, to provide for her family. She negotiates her way by illegal vending, undermining the authority and power of the state. Onai becomes the breadwinner of her family. She epitomizes the resilience and creativity of women whom the author wishes to acknowledge and celebrate. She reinvents pre-*murambatsvina* trading activities and learns to sneak away from the police. Her friend Katy is involved in "*madhiri"* – "illicit deals" (Kadenge 154) in illegal foreign currency. She is raising money to pay university fees for her daughter and pay for a new stand in the suburbs so that she can escape from township life.

The materiality of the everyday materialises in "provider love". Young women like Melody engage in "the materiality of everyday sex" (Hunter 4), to sponsor their university studies (Tagwira 81). Provider love is evident between Melody and Chanda (Christiansen, "Respectable Women" 515). She explains that the term originates from the historical practice of polygamy where a man has two wives, one senior and the other junior. Today it is slang for "single women

who have relationships with married men" (Christiansen 515), but there can be some kind of stable relationship based on provider love. Chanda is a married man who is financing Melody's studies. She justifies her action by saying, "Blame the economy for forcing…me into a corner" (82). Educational status is a choice between death and survival for Melody, and she makes a choice-less choice to attain it. Moreover, financial security is a big factor in Faith's relationship with Tom, the business man. She "recognised that she had choices, and determined to make them wisely" (82), but her choices are for the time being limited to marrying a rich man.

Male-authored economic systems that are insensitive to women and children force women to make choice-less choices that render them vulnerable. Tracing prostitution from ancient times, Dagin argues that "this is principally promoted by various problems ranging from social inequality to economic deprivation" (24). Women sell their bodies because of a need to survive. Material needs influence Sheila's choice as she says, "When I was a prostitute, I didn't care about catching HIV. I thought I would die from hunger, anyway. As a prostitute, I could at least die with a full stomach" (62). The materiality of the everyday forces her to choose between life and death. Also, Gloria wants a committed man to provide shelter for her and chooses to become Gari's lover. But, when her shack is destroyed by the authorities, she manipulates Gari into marrying her in her search for secure accommodation. Gloria and Sheila have no education and social skills to enable them to negotiate their way around this treacherous urban terrain, and thus they sell their bodies. All these women have to "win bread" in a hostile environment and their lack of options drives them to engage in the materiality of everyday sex to survive.

Phiri's *Highway Queen* opens with the statement, "When one has a job there is hope for a decent life such as having enough food, owning a home, education for the children, health care and peace of mind. When that hope is taken away, one does not want to imagine it" (Phiri, 7). The narrator, Mrs Mumba, introduces the reader to the importance of everyday material needs as she narrates the dilemma of her family when her husband Stephen's company closes and moves to South Africa and all the workers are retrenched. The extract seems to be a general accusation that Zimbabweans were being robbed of the hope of job security. The Mumba family live a decent and happy life before their breadwinner is retrenched, but as the plot unfolds Stephen fails to get a second job that requires his skills, and succumbs to drink. The family house is sold to pay off the mortgage and they move to Hope Fountain Squatter camp. Mrs Sophie Mumba tries market-vending and cross-border trade but all her efforts are thwarted by police crackdowns, instigated by a government that values cleanliness more than supporting women and creating employment. Eventually, she turns to the sex trade to provide her children with the basic necessities of life, after all other avenues of survival have failed, though she manages to maintain the dual identity of Mrs Mumba and a prostitute separately. Through the plight of Sophie Mumba in *Highway Queen*,

Phiri portrays the effects of failed government policies on women and children. Thus, all the choices women make confirm that the materiality of the everyday determines the choices one makes and shapes one's identity.

Tagwira and Phiri are involved in advocacy work. Powell and Steinburg explain that non-profit defined advocacy represents "the collective interests of the general public and under-represented groups as opposed to the interests of well-organized powerful groups" (*The Non-Profit Sector* 307). They advance the public interest, lobbying for collective good, with "moral convictions about the rightness of policies as opposed to narrow economic interests" (Powell and Steinburg). Both, Tagwira and Phiri position themselves as gender activists and human rights advocates. In *The Uncertainty of Hope*, the authorial voice of Faith comments that "Ordinary people have rights too!" (161). She makes this comment after hearing of the impending demolition of illegal homes in Mbare. Through her voice, Tagwira is advocating a respect for human rights and especially for the marginalised members of society. In an interview, Tagwira reveals how the Zimbabwean crisis has shaped the social focus and feminist thrust of her writing:

> When I initially started thinking about writing, I had a desire to do something different, something creative, and because I'm something of a "mild feminist" at heart, I always knew that I would write something featuring strong female characters. Writing about contemporary Zimbabwe was a natural choice because I am very much attached to "home" and I travel back quite frequently. At each visit, it strikes me how the living standards are deteriorating, and at each visit, I never imagine that things can get any worse, but they do, and people still survive. I was particularly concerned about how women deal with the challenges that are thrust upon them. (Tagwira 2009)

Although Tagwira positions herself as a "mild feminist", *The Uncertainty of Hope* appears to speak from a strong feminist perspective. But her theorisation of the everyday life of women, gender violence in contemporary Zimbabwean society, the role of patriarchal structures in sustaining male violence and how she indicts the government for its failure to provide security and access to the materiality of the everyday for all families, literally making women rely on provider love – all these declare her to be a feminist activist.

Also writing as an advocate for HIV/AIDS prevention, Tagwira encourages women and men to use condoms in order to reduce the risk of HIV infection and the level of catastrophic HIV/AIDS related deaths. In an interview with Lizzy Attree, Tagwira says, "When we were doing community medicine, way back in medical school, we were also taught how the media – TV, newspapers and literature – could be used as a means of health education, whether it be among

adults or in schools. So, yes, I had a conviction that my book could be used to create awareness…." (*Blood on the Page* 149). In Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* Katy packs condoms for her husband in case he may want to engage in extra-marital sex, to minimize infection (242). Melody also says "there are condoms, condoms, and more condoms" (81) and regards them as an effective protective strategy. She recognizes that "Sex is linked with death, not life, with plastic, not human flesh," as she recognizes that the most basic and urgent relationship between the sexes has changed utterly for her generation (Alden, '"Coming Unstuck': Masculine Identities" 96). Women have a voice, as writers and as characters, to tell their stories, and draw on the everyday for inspiration.

Phiri also takes her role as a spokesperson for voiceless women seriously as she says: "There are certain situations where women cannot speak for themselves because of fear, embarrassment and the lack of a forum. Some have even gone to their grave before speaking out. So I cover the voiceless in the areas that I cover so that society comes up with corrective measures" (Zvinonzwa 5). Through Mrs Mumba the writer deconstructs the negative characteristics attributed to prostitutes by giving her a voice to speak for herself and by focusing on the positive things that Mrs Mumba does for her family and society in general. Using the first person narrative, a highly effective method, the stories told by the prostitutes come alive and appeal to the reader, making her briefly examine the ordinary life of a woman who has been denied basic human needs by a male nationalist government. Also, through Mrs Mumba, Phiri shows the risks of prostitution and the activist role that prostitutes can play in combating HIV/AIDS if they are educationally empowered. She produces the politicised prostitute who comes up with a new social movement of fighting against young girls' prostitution whilst also conscientising and mobilising other prostitutes to use condoms to combat HIV/AIDS. But Phiri also focuses on their moral predicament due to the material hardships that women endure in order to access essential commodities for the survival of their children.

6.3 Displacement: Man-made Disaster versus Natural Disaster

While the marginalised township communities and citizens were struggling every day to eke out a living during the Zimbabwean socio-economic and political crises, different disasters struck them. I use Martina Kopf's concept of "man-made disaster" and "natural disaster" ("Trauma, Narrative") to analyse, textually, the destruction caused by the May 2005 Operation *Murambatsvina* as depicted in Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope*, Phiri's *Highway Queen* and Gappah's short story, "An Elegy for Easterly". Kopf adopts the "man-made disaster" concept used in trauma theory to discuss the role of art as a "form of empathic witnessing" while analysing the trauma of slavery as depicted in literature (42). The women writers under study bear

witness to the traumatic historic events of the Murambatsvina that brought the unfolding Zimbabwe crisis to the attention of the international community and the United Nations. Different motives for Operation *Murambatsvina* have been given, but that is not my focus in this study.[57] Using the dirt trope of the *Murambatsvina* metaphor, the bulldozer trope, and the HIV virus, I read the texts as disaster narratives. I argue that Operation *Murambatsvina* was a man-made disaster that exacerbated the HIV/AIDS natural disaster to unprecedented catastrophic levels. I also propose that the man-made Zimbabwe crisis resulted in massive internal and external displacement as recounted in NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*.

The plot of *The Uncertainty of Hope* unfolds in May 2005, as bulldozers shatter people's dreams during Operation *Murambatsvina* in Mbare's high-density suburbs. In the Shona language a *Murambatsvina* denotes a person who rejects filth, but in the context of the government authorities "*Murambatsvina*" meant cleaning out rubbish and trash. Operation *Murambatsvina* happened soon after the Asian tsunami disaster which was seen by the whole world on television as it unfolded. Deborah Potts says, "The operation was nicknamed Operation Tsunami by the victims, due to its speed and ferocity" (2006). Operation Murambatsvina was generally referred to as the Zimbabwean tsunami, expressed in a hygiene metaphor of "flushing out dirt" (222), to use the government's discourse. The "dirty criminals" were engaged in "illicit foreign currency" deals, as John and his wife Katy were. However, John discredits the state discourse saying, "The line between what's legal and what is not has never been as blurred as it is now" (27). The text seems to suggest that the authorities have failed to enforce law and order and thus the discourse of law and order has been brought into disrepute.

There have been different readings of the representation of the *Murambatsvina* Operation in Tagwira's *Uncertainty of Hope*. Nyambi argues that the novel invokes compassion to sway the emotions of readers ("Operation Restore Order"), and Muchemwa focuses on the precarious citizenship of township urbanites considered disposable by the authorities ("Old and New Fictions"). I am more interested in how the texts are "bearing witness" (Kopf 42) to Operation *Murambatsvina* and the management of the disaster, how *Murambatsvina* interacted with the HIV/AIDS pandemic paving the way for catastrophic deaths. Tagwira represents the disaster focusing on the everyday effects of the disaster on the vulnerable victims of state aggression.

[57] See Oliver Nyambi. "Operation Restore Order: Re-comprehending Zimbabwe's 2005 Urban Slum Clearance in Valerie Tagwira's Award Winning Novel, *The Uncertainty of Hope*." *Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* III. 3.2 (2012). Maurice Vambe (ed.). *The Hidden Dimensions of Operation Murambatsvina in Zimbabwe*. Harare: Weaver Press, 2008. "Order out of chaos, or chaos out of order?: A preliminary report on Operation Murambatsvina." Harare: Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, 2005. http://reliefweb.int/node/413506.

Using the technique of providing the reader with a "witnessing voice", Tagwira effectively enables the narrator to describe the atmosphere in Mbare before the pending police blitz, as the rumours start filtering down to the ordinary people: "the air was saturated with fear, anger and anxiety" (Tagwira 141). When Tom tells his girlfriend Faith of the imminent violent operation, Faith argues that, "Half of Mbare's population lives in shacks. Where would they all go? And if markets are closed, these people would starve!" she exclaims (22). She finds the information unbelievable, which Tagwira weaves into the natural conversation between boyfriend and girlfriend. Ruva, Onai's young daughter, also draws the reader's attention to the fact that the people being referred to in the radio report as criminals are ordinary women and men struggling daily to get scarce food for their children (113). Ruva questions her mother about when they will get food. Her question draws empathy, but also disturbingly deconstructs the state discourse which criminalises innocent victims of government mismanagement and the ill-conceived Third *chimurenga* policy that has resulted in the unavailability of maize and other staple foods in the shops. Tagwira draws attention to the women and children now suffering from the state fathers' failure to provide, and they are also going to be the recipients of state violence. Tagwira gives a voice to women and children to bear witness to the suffering being endured by marginalised people.

Tagwira cites a Zimbabwe radio broadcast reporter: "The exercise to demolish markets as a means of flushing out criminals, and getting rid of trading places which had become a health hazard, was still continuing. As the reporter intoned, this would pave way for more orderly, more hygienic trading in crime-free zones" (222). In the extract, words like "demolish" "flush out" "getting rid of," "health hazard", "orderly", "hygienic" and "crime free", capture the attitude and hidden agenda of this insensitive, inhumane operation. The bulldozer is an image of the destructive power and might of the government in harming those who threaten its hegemony. The effects and speed of destruction were fast and devastating because Mbare is a hub of informal business, a market centre for farm produce, with a long-distance and cross-border bus station. It is also an old township, known for crime, prostitution, overcrowding and poverty.

Fearing that the citizens might uprise and revolt against the authorities because of their failure to manage the state, the authorities criminalises them. Assistant Commissioner Nzou, in charge of the operation in Mbare (the highest government official in the text), says: "The country had to be rid of the crawling mass of maggots, all bent on destroying the economy" to restore the status of Harare as the "sunshine city" (135). Nzou's reasoning mimics Sekai Makuvarara's statement before the evictions, when he announced that "The city of Harare wishes to advise that in its efforts to improve service delivery within the city, it will embark on Operation Murambatsvina, in conjunction with the Zimbabwe Republic Police. This is a programme to enforce bye-laws to stop

all forms of illegal activity" (qtd. "In Order out of Chaos"). She was the state-appointed chairperson of the Harare Commission in the operation. She argued that launching Operation *Murambatsvina* would restore Harare city to its "sunshine status". The word "operation" captures the military-style brutality appropriated during the demolition of homes and businesses. The poor are the maggots and the dirt that the government is getting rid of by "flushing out". The state criminalises the poor, marginalised citizens that it views as a threat to its power.

In this discussion I refer to Operation *Murambatsvina* as the Zimbabwean man-made Tsunami disaster, while I consider the HIV/AIDS epidemic as a natural disaster, exacerbated by displacement and poverty. I will utilise these words and phrases to analyse the insensitivity of the authorities who use this discourse to defend an ill-planned political operation disguised as cleaning the city.

The Zimbabwean government engineered a "man-made disaster", to quote Kopf. Kopf defines a "man-made disaster" as "a concept used in trauma theory to name events of severe social impact which are collectively experienced as traumatic….and to distinguish them from natural catastrophes…which were not wilfully caused…" ("Slavery in Art" 41). I adopt his definition to describe Operation *Murambatsvina* as a "man-made disaster". Miller concurs, arguing that a disaster becomes a disaster when "everyday or daily life becomes a template for politics" ("Corruption, Authority" 45). *Murambatsvina* interacts with poverty in predictable ways, as the impoverished subjects are the first casualty and their everyday life is disrupted. These subjects are those "Shattered, displaced and beside themselves" (Miller, *Law in Crisis* 1). In *The Uncertainty of Hope* the subjects are those without skills or resources, hence were likely not to have cash to get accommodation as the rent quadrupled to one million dollars a month for a single room, as the families seek refuge in the open Tsiga Grounds amidst the turmoil (Tagwira 147). But even hastily assembled emergency shelters on the field are demolished as constituting a "health hazard" (155).

The gendered dimension of the crisis is articulated by Faith, who is the voice of reason. The authorial voice of reason questions the timing of the operation : "It's winter...people will be sleeping in the open and in make-shift shelters. What about children?" (Tagwira 146). Judith Hermann emphasizes the impossibility of keeping a neutral stance:

> To study psychology means bearing witness to horrible events. When events are natural disasters or "acts of God," those who bear witness sympathize with the victim. But when the traumatic events are of human design, those who bear witness are caught in the conflict between victim and perpetrator. It is morally impossible to

> remain neutral in this conflict. The bystander is forced to take sides (*Trauma and Recovery* 7).

Empathic witnessing is portrayed in Faith's statement. She is aware of the cold weather conditions and the effects these will have on women and children. The gendered nature of the disaster is portrayed through the children trapped in shacks and killed (Tagwira 155), images of women sitting around the fire in the open shielding the children, and families with young children having to huddle, homeless, in the winter air in a nearby open field (280). As commented by John, "The suffering will overwhelm whatever benefits are supposed to come out of this" (168). The demolitions expose what it means materially to be poor and homeless, as the already vulnerable group had already been targeted.

In times of disaster people generally expect the government to protect its citizens from suffering. The Zimbabwean man-made tsunami prompted widespread discussion locally and internationally. Through Faith, Tagwira argues that someone should be held responsible. The timing (in winter and soon after losing elections to the new MDC Party) and the handling of the disaster exposed the inhumanity of the regime.[58] William Freudenburg posits that issues of blame and responsibility for disasters increasingly involve recreancy, that is, a collective perception that some person(s) and/or organization(s) did not fulfil their normative obligations in relation to the disaster" ("Risk and Recreancy" 910). Responsibility narratives in the texts depict how the disaster reflects increasing levels of recreancy in the form of heightened anger, frustration and stress. Churches and charity organizations responded to the catastrophe by providing basic needs to the survivors and housing orphans (like Sheila's child in *Uncertainty*), as it became clear that the government had no plan in place to manage homelessness, relocation, personal or financial loss and injury. Lloyd Sachikonye says an estimated 700,000 people were directly affected and displaced, and 2.5 million people were indirectly affected by the operation during the actual demolitions (*When a State* 26). The indifference of the authorities towards human suffering during the tragedy provoked a debate on the real reasons for such violence, as issues of responsibility and moral legitimacy were raised. For the government, the victims of *Murambatsvina* were flouting urban bye-laws, and threatened the official ideology of Zimbabwean national identity of an orderly, clean sunshine city. For the textual characters witnessing and experiencing the disaster, what the government did amounted to widespread

[58] The United Nations envoy's report mentioned the cold weather that affected women and children and the sick. Tibaijuka, A. "Report of the fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe to assess the scope and impact of Operation Murambatsvina by the UN special envoy on human settlements issues in Zimbabwe" http://www.unhabitat.org/documents/ZimbabweReport.pdf.

criminality and human-rights violations. Tagwira appears to be indicting government for negligence in not protecting the vulnerable and the marginalised.

Tagwira challenges the state version of cleaning the city, by depicting how the city became dirty because of a malfunctioning city council that does not collect rubbish, including rubble from the demolitions. Whilst the government accuses victims of the *Murambatvina* of being criminals, Tagwira portrays them as suffering citizens – particularly women who are trying to survive, together with their families. Whilst traders are considered to be involved in hoarding basic commodities, creating artificial shortages and spearheading rocketing inflation, Tagwira depicts that they are actually crossing borders to bring back items not available in the country. Hence, they do not deserve to be targets of government anger and retribution. Yet the government itself, by its actions, indulges in state-sponsored black market activities and abuses the power of the state, involved in corruption – which is the real cause of the economic crisis.

The interaction and convergence of the man-made crisis and HIV/AIDS virus caused widespread deaths. The economy contracted dramatically due to the man-made Tsunami. The economic collapse exacerbated the AIDS natural disaster, as mitigating measures of ARV and access to food were disrupted by poverty and the malfunctioning of state hospitals. All sectors of the economy collapsed, giving the displaced little hope of recovery. The authorial voice in *The Uncertainty of Hope* says that "Just a week of sleeping in the open had already ravaged Sheila's health; her cough was worse, her eyes lifeless pools in a face worn by fatigue. She now had the familiar, skeletal appearance of a victim of full-blown AIDS" (Tagwira 156). Sheila's deterioration in health is exacerbated by the *Murambatsvina* that renders her homeless, thereby having her HIV-infected body exposed to harsh weather conditions and malnutrition at the Tsiga grounds and holding camps. Also, the health sector was not equipped to manage the health crisis that ensued. Sheila dies, leaving her child with no one to take care of her (Tagwira 213). Gari too dies because he is denied access to any medicine to treat him, as the hospitals do not have any. The text makes a clear distinction between victim and perpetrator, bearing witness to the unjust deaths rendered by a government that considers its citizens dispensable in its desire for power.

Phiri, Gappah and NoViolet Bulawayo depict the cycles of displacement experienced by marginalised members of Zimbabwean society. They revisit the farms inhabited by those evicted from Mbare Township in 1991 and other places during clean-up operations, one of these being preparation for the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government

Meeting (CHOGM).[59] Musiyiwa argues that the government's "bulldozer policy" to destroy illegal urban dwellings started in 1983, when the government removed illegal township dwellers who had come to the city to escape the violence of the second *chimurenga*, and it used the same strategy in the 1991 clean-up operation, when evicted people were settled on Porta Farm (Eschatology 65). Tagwira, Phiri and NoViolet Bulawayo each re-imagine different versions of Porta Farm camp dwellers as victims of government operations. This is a very bold action, as it suggests a kind of continuity – that the government has a culture of violating and abusing marginalised members of society with impunity. These women writers draw the world's attention to a systematic culture of rendering the marginalised homeless, destitute and displaced.

Phiri's *Highway Queen* details the destruction of the Hope Fountain squatter camp during the man-made disaster created by state agents (182). The squatter camp was turned into a war zone as the state agents burned shacks and in the process killed people by suffocation. Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* adopts a realist mode as it depicts how the community come together, helping the camp residents trapped in destroyed shacks, some dying and women giving birth on roadsides (186-187). The narrator says, "My heart sank as l thought of all the people who were being assisted by AIDS service organisations. Their medication would be disrupted. I could see most of them dying of stress. (183). At the camp one retired police officer takes it upon himself to organise the camp community to carry the injured and the sick to hospitals. The narrator explains that Simon, an AIDS patient, died and three others – because of the cold (187). The protagonist takes her husband Stephen who was suffering from HIV/AIDS to the rural areas. But his health deteriorates because the clinics have no medicine and he does not have enough food to eat.

Gappah's "An Elegy for Easterly" mourns the destruction of the Easterly Farm squatter camp. As reflected in the epigraph, Gappah celebrates the "will of the people to survive – their resilience, sense of humour [and] determination" (Appendix B of this thesis). The camp is inhabited by the sick and the marginalised, struggling to eke out a living for their families through hard work. Using humour, Gappah depicts how the Easterly residents were put there by an uncaring government, as depicted by the dismissive and insensitive attitude of the government official: "Allow them temporary structures, and promise them real walls and doors, windows and toilets" (32). The internally displaced people manage to rebuild their lives, and live relatively normal lives in houses of poles and mud, or thick plastic sheeting for walls and clear plastic for windows" (27).

[59] See Mickias Musiwa, "Eschatology, magic, nature and politics: The responses of the people of Epworth to the tragedy of Operation Murambatsvina." He explains how the people of Epworth, a former squatter camp, have experienced the different clean-up operations. Ed. Maurice Vambe. *The Hidden Dimensions of Operation Murambatsvina in Zimbabwe*". Harare: Weaver Press (2008).

These are houses without numbers, but known by the names of their occupants, "Mai James house, Mai Toby's House" (27). It is these houses that are destroyed by the bulldozers (50). Using humour and a satirical narrative mode, Gappah indicts the government for destroying people's lives without caring, and makes visible the occupants' families' identities and their humanity. The story deconstructs the discourse of criminality imposed on the residents, but registers the inhumanity of the government and city fathers who have abandoned their moral responsibility to take care of and protect the vulnerable of society.

Tagwira, Phiri and Gappah depict how man-made disasters cause internal displacement that makes HIV/AIDS patients fail to get their ARV drugs, while homelessness exposes their fragile bodies to the harsh winter weather, so they are effectively sentenced to death by their situation. HIV/ AIDS is not a death sentence or a lethal injection, provided one gets medication, eats healthily, has access to treatment and has a home that protects one from other infections that might result in premature death. Some patients also die because of a failure to find food whilst taking antiretroviral drugs, which require someone to eat food whilst taking them. Thus, the Zimbabwean man-made disaster is "due to negligence or deliberate intent, and generally resulted in greater psychological distress" (Young et al., "The Response" 1). The women writers capture the moment of people's suffering, whilst analysing the confluence of man-made disaster and HIV/AIDS virus in producing catastrophic numbers of deaths.

The man-made disaster caused massive internal and external displacement. NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* focuses on Darling's internal displacement from the shanty town of her childhood. *We Need New Names* has been the winner of a myriad of awards, including the Hemingway Foundation Award, the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, the Art Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction and the Etisalat Prize for Literature in 2013, as well as being shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. The novel is about a young girl named Paradise who narrates her everyday life after her home is destroyed by a bulldozer – alluding to Operation *Murambatsvina* and her family and the other marginalised people who are moved to a squatter camp ironically named Paradise. The bulldozer erases houses and causes massive suffering and death in *We Need New Names* (66-67). The children's everyday lives are defined by material lack and a quest for survival, crossing internal borders from the squatter camp to the leafy suburbs to steal guavas. Darling's father immigrates to South Africa and she realises her dream when she illegally immigrates to America to live with her aunt. Diaspora life experiences are the focus of this discussion, as I analyse the representation of the Zimbabwean diaspora, gender and identity through the tropes of naming and of migration. I show how the immigrants' journey to a future of greener pastures turns into a nightmare for the displaced Zimbabweans.

Emigrating to the diaspora is the only escape route from poverty and hunger, to decent housing and access to education as envisioned by Darling and her friends. Muchemwa rightly notes that "When people are violently torn from places of belonging they are bereft of identity or forced into a crisis of identity" ("Old and New Fictions" 137). When Darling's family is violently removed from the childhood family home, destroyed by the government bulldozer, the family is torn apart. Privileging the child's voice, Darling voices the suffering endured by children displaced to a squatter camp –Paradise. Her educated father migrates to South Africa but returns sick. Darling's constant quest is to emigrate to America where her aunt lives. "How they lived", a chapter in Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, represents the exhilaration and excitement of Third World people travelling to the future. It depicts the idealised and false ideology of upward social mobility circulating in a crisis-torn Zimbabwe. As Bulawayo says, "When things fall apart, the children of the land scurry and scatter like birds escaping a burning sky. They flee their own wretched land so that their hunger may be pacified in foreign lands, their tears wiped away in strange lands" (145-6). The plural pronoun "they" denotes a very large collective movement. The children of the land are optimistic, as they travel to the future of greener pastures, that their hunger will be "pacified" and "tears wiped away." The idealisation of America as a land of dreams and possibilities is symbolised in the re-naming chapter where they try to do an abortion on their eleven-year-old friend Chipo who was raped by her uncle: "ER is what they do in hospital in America. In order to do this right, we need new names. I am Dr. Bullet, she is beautiful, and you are Dr. Roz, he is tall" (82). The girls are "seeking a new identity that links them to idolized images of America…highlighting the false ideal these children hold in regarding America a society , high skills, advanced technology and wealth while giving Darling her own narrative through names to describe these experiences" (Fitzpatrick Desiree "From Paradise" 18). Boehmer explains how "colonized peoples were represented as lesser: less human, less civilized, as child or savage, wild man, animal, or headless mass" (Boehmer, "Colonial and Postcolonial Literature" 76). So, Bulawayo recreates this image as the girls show their knowledge of America. Re-naming symbolises the need to re-script, re-invent identities when old ones fail.

Houses are loci of identity, class and race. Darling has to constantly re-negotiate her identity as displacement creates "shifts in ways of experiencing the world and naming the world" (Polo Belina Moji, "New Names, Translational Subjectivities" 182). In the new nation home Darling suffers from geographic alienation as the winter weather is harsh and she finds herself enclosed in the house. She experiences language problems and is constantly mocked by other students because of her language, accent and skin colour. She experiences loss of identity, constantly being "othered," and given an African identity (Moji 187). Thus, the trope of migration as upward social mobility is subverted as she is trapped in a generalised identity that has no meaning for her, since Africa is a continent with many countries, different people and cultures."How They Lived"

"illustrates how the dream of escape to a land of plenty becomes a cycle of dangerous unwanted jobs and the constant fear of deportation" (Moji, "New Names" 187). The chapter "How they lived," deconstructs this "celebratory narrative of globalisation" (Simon Gikandi, "Globalisation" 631). The narrator says:

> And the jobs we worked, Jesus – Jesus – Jesus, the jobs we worked. Low paying jobs. Back breaking jobs. Jobs that gnawed at the bones of our dignity, devoured the meat, tongued the marrow. We took scalding irons and ironed our pride flat. We cleaned toilets. We picked tobacco and fruit under the boiling sun until we hung our tongues and panted like lost hounds. We butchered animals, slit throats, drained blood. (*We Need New Names* 244)

The extract represents diasporan realities. The grown-up Darling has to do many jobs for extra money, like all "we" immigrants. Like all illegal immigrants, Darling is also trapped in America because she cannot go home. The quest for escape, and the search for possibility, ends in disillusionment for the emigrants as they find themselves doing menial jobs.

However, a positive factor is that women in the diaspora send remittances home to financially support those suffering in Africa.

> Every two weeks we got our pay checks and sent monies back home by Western Union and MoneyGram. We bought food and clothes for the families left behind; we paid school fees for the little ones. We got messages that said Hunger, that said Help, that said Kunzima, and we sent money. When we were asked, You guys work so hard, why do you work so hard? We smiled. (*We Need New Name* 244)

The Zimbabwean immigrants' quest is for economic stability, not sovereignty. They work in manual jobs to sustain the families left at home. Aunt Faustina and other immigrants work double shifts so that they can get money to send home. Diaspora remittances sustained many families during the Zimbabwe crisis. However, Darling's father does not support his family when he goes to the diaspora, but he returns home after many years when he has HIV/ADS related sickness and dies (89). So, the novel deconstructs their idealised notion of upward social mobility and depicts the real everyday life of immigrants.

6.4 Vulnerability and Agency

The post-2008 women writers celebrate the heroic women who survived the deepening socio-political crisis that affected every facet of Zimbabwe's everyday life, as the national fathers became authoritarian and reneged on their national responsibilities to provide and protect. Butler

argues that "a body is a social phenomenon: it is exposed to others, vulnerable by definition. It's very persistence depends upon social conditions and institutions" (33). The body finds itself in "unwilled proximity to others and to circumstances beyond one's control" and this "coming up against" defines the body and animates responsiveness to the world. "That responsiveness may include a wide range of affects: pleasure, rage, suffering, hope" (*Frames of War* 34). The literary Zimbabwean women's affective responses to their socio-political, economic, and cultural conditions are formed and framed by their precarious conditions. This section seeks to examine the shifts in gender identity and how such transformations impact on men and women's agency and vulnerabilities in the context of Zimbabwe's post-2000 economic crisis.

Focusing on women's agency in *The Uncertainty of Hope*, I propose that constrained agency is bestowed on women characters who devise innovative skills and strategies individually and as alliances to subvert patriarchy. Isaacs defines feminist agency as "ability to be effective agents against their own oppression" ("Feminism and Agency" 129). In the context of this study I define constrained agency as the ability to be nominal agents, aware of the circumscribed spaces available to negotiate freedom and individuality. Women in the crisis-ridden homes and nation managed by authoritarian and repressive patriarchy in Zimbabwe are exposed to multi-layered complex gender-based repression and violence. So, their agency is informed by the vicissitudes of unfolding male- authored crisis and obsessive patriarchal protectiveness, holding on to political power and privilege at all costs, navigating, negotiating and engaging with it in order to survive and dominate the story.

Nyambi argues that a "new woman" heroine reclaiming her agency emerges in *The Uncertainty of Hope*, describing Onai as a symbol of the "resolute and conquering spirit of a woman endowed with natural talents and abilities" ("The 'new' woman" 41). Chitando argues that some of the women in Phiri and Tagwira's texts exercise "flawed agency," a concept Motsemme develops from *ukuphanta*.[60]. She argues that "[i]n addition, when we consider the broader social processes of economic marginalisation, political apathy, material lack and employment racism within which their subjectivities are being produced, we are left with celebrating what at best can be termed a flawed agency" (cited in Chitando, *Narrating Gender* 84). I argue that Onai thus exercises constrained agency, because of the powerful social, political and economic forces in space and time.

When operation *Murambatsvina's* man-made disaster destroyed informal market stalls at Mbare, traders and vendors demonstrated a high level of political sophistication by opting for "adaptive

[60] Ukuphanda or ukuphanta is a philosophy of survival which can be summarized as a way of 'getting by', 'making ends meet'. Although the term means doing anything that will bring in money, in the townships it is mainly used to describe 'illegal'/non-conventional ways to make ends meet (Motsemme 2007:80).

resistance" (Musoni "Operation *Murambatsvina*" 307). Musoni states that, "rather than viewing roadside traders as passive victims of state-sponsored violence", we should view them "as critical thinkers whose interactions with the state are guided by a deep understanding of the broader politics of the day" (Musoni 307). In *The Uncertainty of Hope,* Onai adopts adaptive resistance, illegally trading at service stations to provide the everyday basic material needs for her children. She reinvents pre-*murambatsvina* trading activities and learns to sneak away from the police. She exercises her agency by not crumbling under constant state terror and violence. She epitomizes the creativity and resilience of women that the text wishes to acknowledge and celebrate.

Onai's constrained agency is portrayed in the submissive and rebellious position she takes in her marriage with Gari. However, Onai performs selective submissiveness, as portrayed by her refusal to have sex with Gari without condoms. The authorial voice comments that Onai's…
biggest failure as a wife lay in refusing Gari his conjugal rights…unless he agreed to use condoms. In a rare moment of rebelliousness, she had told him clearly no condoms, no intimacy. She felt a twinge of guilt, then immediately forgave herself. What was a woman supposed to do with a philandering husband when the risk of HIV infection was so real? So real that everyone in a relationship was at risk?" (69).

The extract shows how marital sex became a source of infection for women with philandering husbands, hence the need for married women to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS infection by using condoms. In Shona culture, what Onai does is the most rebellious action, because women are culturally conditioned to have sex with their husbands whenever men want, and refusing is an unforgivable sin. Nnaemeka emphasises "the importance of cultural literacy to any valid feminist theorising of African literature" (Introduction: Imag(in)ing knowledge 1). Hence Christiansen's conclusion that Onai is the "tragic heroine" of a traditional marriage (524, 518 "Respectable Women") fails to understand one of the most pivotal rebellious acts in the novel. However, while she defies patriarchy and survives infection, her marriage is under constant strain because Gari resorts to the notorious Gloria, who is HIV-positive and who eventually manipulates Gari to bring her to the marital home as his second wife. Thus, while the text celebrates Onai's rebellion against conjugal unprotected sex that rescues her from HIV infection, her constrained agency is evident.

Turning to *Highway Queen*, Mrs Mumba crosses borders, selling her body to truck drivers and also learns the hide-and-seek game with the police who arrest prostitutes. She also uses condoms with her husband (156), but finds it difficult to negotiate safe sex with her clients. The narrator brings out the challenges that HIV-positive sex workers face: "I still had problems in persuading customers to use condoms. I felt guilty of spreading the AIDS virus but there was no way I would have told men that I was HIV-positive. The least I did was to offer them condoms, which they

refused." (99). Women's agency is limited when male clients refuse to use condoms because they have financial power, so female sex workers have no choice but to concede to unprotected sex.

However, what emerges from the texts is that women threaten the grip of patriarchy by taking control of their bodies and sex, thus transforming their situations. Gaidzanwa posits that "Accepting a victim status may lead women to overestimate the power of the system against them, thus underestimating their potential for struggle to change and liberate themselves and their society" (Gaidzanwa, *Images of Women* 99). One might argue that HIV/AIDS has generally empowered married women to take charge of their sexuality in order to avoid infection. Married women strategically devise intelligent ways of disobedience and subversion, whilst negotiating with, and successfully defeating, patriarchy. The writers celebrate the agency of married women whilst highlighting the constrained circumstances in which they operate.

Onai (*Uncertainty*) and Mrs Mumba (*Highway*) exercise "self-in-relation agency" (Isaacs, "Feminism and Agency" 134-137). Gilligan conceptualises relational agency, proposing the ethic of care.[61] She explains that relational agency entails the moral agent being aware of her relationships with others and responding to their needs (cited in Isaacs 136). Relational theory has defined "care-based agency", which forms the core of responsibility ethics, making the claim that one is obligated to particular others when circumstances render them dependent on us (Isaacs 137) and, according to Walker, practising obligations towards the vulnerable has emancipatory power (*Moral Understandings* 96, cited in Isaacs 135). Onai and Mrs Mumba feel morally obligated to take care of their sick HIV/AIDS infected husbands who were involved in infidelity. The texts seem to grant them the moral high ground for their ethics of care.

The Uncertainty of Hope's greatest contribution to Zimbabwean feminism is its emphasis on the feminist agency of the "self-in-relation to other women" (Isaacs 130). Isaac explains that self-in-relation to other women entails sharing experiences of oppression and acting collectively and in solidarity with each other to subvert patriarchy (Isaacs 139-141). Tagwira suggests that whilst not a homogenous group, and from different classes and backgrounds, women can form alliances. By forming alliances women can shape their destiny, in spite of the difficult contexts, and significantly contribute to social transformation. Through female bonding Katy, Onai, Faith and Emily come together in complex ways and wage successful struggles against patriarchy. Educated, empowered, strategic and assertive young women activists like Faith and Emily fight for female empowerment. They are a threat to patriarchal rule as they consistently challenge the

[61] Carol Gilligan proposes ethics of care (Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Cambridge: Havard University Press, 1982). There has been a feminist debates on how this contributes to women's continued oppression

patriarchal state through projects like Kushinga, which literally means "women have to be brave or courageous enough" to fight for their rights and for a liberated post-2000 Zimbabwe. Women mobilise themselves and demonstrate against oppression and injustice, even though the regime is ruthless in its response to dissenting voices, and in *The Uncertainty* a group of women carrying flowers to celebrate Valentines Day is brutally attacked by riot police. A peaceful demonstration, in the name of defending the revolution against domestic violence by the unarmed women from Kushinga Women's Project, is violently crushed, whilst women are mercilessly beaten (264-265). The text seems to suggest that women's constrained agency is still alive, despite the violent forces of opposition.

While the image of a resilient persevering woman is neatly curved, Onai struggles to realise her dreams and to provide shelter and food for her children. She seems almost defeated by the overwhelming forces against her. The text deploys a utopian fantasy fairy-tale ending as Onai is rescued by Tapiwa Jongwe, a business man. Tapiwa Jongwe (nicknamed Mawaya) gives Onai a job sewing dressing gowns and managing his dead wife's boutique. Tapiwa Jongwe embarks on a purification rite (*kutanda botso*) to cleanse himself from guilt after his wife dies in an accident. He decides to do the mourning ritual for his wife as penance. Tapiwa is a symbol of caring and loving masculinity who is accountable for his mistakes. A love affair between Onai and Tapiwa is implied. Also, the flourishing love between Faith and Tom portrays him as a man who has repented of using women. Writing from an African feminist perspective, Tagwira portrays complementarity and interdependence between reformed men and assertive women as prerequisites for rebuilding a new Zimbabwe.

Shifting attention to Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, representing women on the move to the diaspora. Bulawayo recuperates exilic writing to mediate the experiences of the ordinary people who are not at home. Despite the challenges Darling and aunt Faustina encounter they transcend their problems. Aunt Faustina works overnight shifts and sends remittances home to support those engulfed by the crisis. She also helps Darling immigrate illegally to America. New configurations and practices of power are depicted as women become bread-winners and more mobile in the texts under study. Whilst crisis-ridden women exercise "constrained" agency, due to circumstances and obstacles they find in their way, a heroic image of resilient, persevering women is constituted by the written archives of the Zimbabwe crisis.

On a different note, the economic crisis inverts traditional gender stereotypes, as men crumble emotionally and psychologically during the crisis. The crisis disempowers and emasculates Zimbabwean men, who find themselves jobless and unable to provide for their families and men have been socialized to think that they are different from women, in this respect. When Gari and

Silas are troubled by the prospect of losing their jobs, Gari says, "Cheer up Silas! Tiri varume, we are men. We must not panic like a bunch of women. We will face the problems when they come. No use worrying now. It won't solve anything" (37). The stereotype of "a bunch of women" who always panic, and the ensuing assertion of one's manhood through 'tiri varume' (we are men), can be dangerous to both women and men. As the reality of unemployment sinks in, Gari resorts to drinking, and in *Highway Queen* Stephen also drinks *kachasu* home-brewed beer. Men often resort to alcohol to escape from the reality of a crisis. In *Uncertainty of Hope*, the spectacle of Hondo, the former freedom fighter, trying to protect his house from being destroyed by the bulldozer and to protect his goods imported from South Africa, evokes empathy. Failing to comprehend the callousness of the nationalist government for which he risked his life fighting during the second *chimurenga*, and inconsolable at the police destroying his home –the only possession he has after Zimbabwean independence –he commits suicide. The disruption of gender roles and stereotypes is evident in the way the men deal with a changing political and economic situation.

Men confront death in another way, as dying young forces them to confront their vulnerability, due to AIDS/HIV. In a different context, in "The strong healthy man: AIDS and self-delusion", Lizzy Attree discusses how the myth of the "strong healthy man" is challenged by disease. The women writers represent the "the vulnerability of the male body to damage or infection" (Attree 60). Gari fails to assert his masculinity by finding a job, and he resorts to sexual prowess. Tagwira shows that Gari's relationship with Gloria makes him a in his own eyes "real man", and Attree discusses how the male body is "bound up with notions of masculinity and physical performance, sexual or otherwise" (59). So, Gari feels like a man with Gloria because she does not use condoms and 'flesh-to-flesh' sexual contact authenticates his manhood. In a different context, in Phiri's *Desperate*, Mr. Zulu, a leader in his community, says, "I will never use the stupid rubber things, never!" (40). Putting on a condom is often seen as a sign of weakness. The women writers break patriarchal taboos on sexuality and expose the lie of the "strong healthy man" by representing decaying infected male bodies through Gari (*Uncertainty*), Stephen (*Highway*), Darling's father (*We Need*), and in Gappah's short story "The Cracked, Pink Lips of Rosie's Bridegroom (Elegy 199). Gari's death is ideologically significant and paves the way for responsible masculinity, aware of its vulnerability (*Uncertainty*): a new gender-equitable and free Zimbabwean society has no place for a violent man like Gari. With the death of Gari, Tagwira intervenes in the materialisation of a new kind of masculinity that stresses responsibility, temperance and healthy bodies. Corrupt men like the police Commissioner, Mr. Nzou, are arrested, thus opening up space for the construction of a new society.

Gari's neighbour, John, who is a truck driver, becomes absolutely faithful to his wife: "Sleeping with a prostitute was something John had done at a much younger age, well before the advent of AIDS. In his mind, that made him a better man than most. He would never expose his wife to HIV, or any other infection. So the condoms were not necessary (Tagwira 243). Realising that his health is dependent on another, John transforms his behaviour and this is symbolic of the emergence of new versions of masculinity, or the New Man foreshadowed by Vera through Cephas, who is empathetic, protective and loving (see Chapter 5).

6.5 Conclusion

The images of resilient women and vulnerable men are constituted during the Zimbabwe crisis. While men's masculinity is deflated by the crisis, women reconfigure gender roles by being creative, resourceful and by becoming breadwinners, sustaining their families. The man-made and natural AIDS virus disasters converge, exposing the vulnerability of the marginalised. It also exposes the corporeality of the male and female body, shifting perceptions on masculinity. The women writers demonstrate that whilst culture sanctions man's promiscuity, the AIDS pandemic requires him to revise his sexual habits. Also, a femininity that takes control of its own body materializes during the HIV era and the Zimbabwe crisis. Women emerge as the stronger, not weaker sex at a time of increasing unemployment, poverty, migration, HIV/AIDS epidemics and state violence. With dignity, insight and profound compassion these texts celebrate the heroic deeds of ordinary men and women who survive the gendered socio-political crisis, while indicting the authorities for causing so much needless human suffering.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This study has examined the re-creation of gender images by Zimbabwean women writers and the ways in which they write gender identities in and of the nation. The fictional texts studied are set in five historical periods – pre-colonial and colonial incursions and the first *chimurenga* (war) from 1890-1897, colonial rule from 1898-1966, the second *chimurenga* 1966-1978, independence and the first two decades of self-rule from 1980-1999, and the so-called third *chimurenga* and Zimbabwe crisis from 2000 to the present – each of which is marked by important gender (re)configurations. The five historical periods refer to the represented setting, not production, of the primary texts. The periodization approach makes evident the significant shifts in gender relations and roles in the home and the nation. Also, organizing primary texts according to their temporal setting has depicted how gendered images are composed in each era, which is then revisited by later generations of writers to re-create those images and inscribe new ones. The women writers revisit the past to raise pertinent issues about the present state of the nation, renegotiate, contest and re-inscribe gendered images located in the five historical periods. This study has analysed the roles which women as writers and characters play in the construction and redefinition of their images and those of their male counterparts. The quest motif, the house trope and the dirt or filth trope interweave through the chapters.

In view of the above, it is worth noting that each transitional moment has its own tensions and instabilities. While the focus has been on analysing the re-creation and redefinition of gender images, the study reveals that it is not an easy and straightforward process. Throughout the study I demonstrate how the questing women's rebellion is fraught with complexities and ambivalences. Women as writers and characters have to negotiate the multiple binds of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality and class. Gender, intersectional and postcolonial feminist theories have helped to analyse how gender is reconstituted by means of complex dynamics which the literary characters have to navigate, as patriarchy constantly mutates in response to political and economic changes. The study reveals that literary women and their creators are also constantly adapting themselves, rebelling, negotiating, renegotiating and engaging with patriarchy.

I position Nehanda as indigenous ancestor, mapping out Zimbabwean women's literary tradition of creativity orally through language, as well as prophecies and visions of the future, representing an inspiration to literary women and their creators who are fighting for freedom. Deploying the

quest motif, as well as the patriarchal house and filth tropes, the Lessing chapter frames the thesis as it looks back to the previous chapter on colonial incursion and anticipates subsequent chapters. Lessing's position as a literary foremother of subversive women's written literature in Zimbabwe is confirmed, as her contemporaries produce multi-layered representations of gender which collaborate in the (re)imagining of the nation, focusing on inclusion, exclusion and belonging.

In Chapter 2, I analyse how Vera deconstructs colonial and nationalist representations of the second *chimurenga* in *Nehanda*. The study shows that during the pre-colonial period there were fluid gender roles which enabled women with a strong personality to take up leadership roles, and enabled man and women to work together to build indigenous houses and work together on many isssues affecting their societies. Re-visiting the past, Vera articulates the violence inflicted on Nehanda/Charwe by the colonial settlers and problematises her own appropriation into the male nationalist tradition. Arguing for the complementarity of men and women, Vera re-creates the image of the woman-hero fighting against colonial incursion, together with the weeping-hunter Kaguvi. Nehanda's fight is to protect the land and the community from colonial incursion.

Chapter 3 discusses Lessing's adaptions of the traditional white settler quest hero who goes on an adventure in search of objects of value and transcends all barriers that hinder him from attaining his goal. I explore how, in the texts presented in this thesis, it is the questing, rebellious woman who undertakes this search for independent self-expression in relation to the ineffective or violent husband, absent father, and possessive boyfriend constituted by colonial modernity. I have argued that the taboo discursive space mapped out by Lessing in *The Grass is Singing*, *Martha Quest* and *A Proper Marriage*, and rebounding in Vera's *Butterfly Burning*, opens up a space for these authors to create the questing, rebellious woman image. This study reveals how the radical Martha Quest charts different flights, beginning with her escape from the farm-house, followed by her escape from the suburban house through divorce and abandoning her child in search of individuality and self-fulfilment (*The Children of Violence* series), which is the literary precursor of Vera's Phephelaphi, who aborts her foetus in search of self-definition by means of a professional career (*Butterfly Burning*).

Chapter 4 uses Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* and Nyamubaya's short story "That Special Place" to map the female quest for freedom from colonialism and indigenous patriarchy. Women writers return to the domestic scene to show how the home front becomes a war zone, as radical rebellion is quashed by patriarchy, while negotiation and compromise bear some bitter fruit. What emerges from the study is that guerrilla women suffered sexual abuse and violence from their male counterparts, especially male nationalist leaders. Women writers revisit the second *chimurenga* narratives to deconstruct the self-glorifying male nationalist hero image, reclaim

women's heroic status and inscribe women's silenced, courageous contributions to national history. The discussion illustrates the advantages and disadvantages of negotiating and engaging with patriarchy. I demonstrate how literary women and their creators use these gender negotiations to redefine the concept of the hero, freeing it from its stifling gender limitations.

In Chapter 5 women's quest for liberation and gender equality focuses on Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* and Vera's *The Stone Virgins*, in the second period after independence. The study analyses the triumphal demobilised guerrilla woman figure in *The Stone Virgins* and the civilian man who finds them fascinating. The combative female guerrilla opens up a space for women's liberation and equal treatment, they claim and flaunt their equality in the field of war, figuratively and sometimes literally displacing men from their sitting positions, symbolic of the unsettling of patriarchy. They do not negotiate because they have earned equality with men by fighting in the war. While they inspire young woman with their powerful stance, they also lose their femininity in the process (as femininity is also coded in patriarchal terms as docility, sexual availablity, submissiveness to men, etc.). What the study reveals is that these changes in gender roles and gender identity are not sustainable, as the patriarchal nationalists unleash the violent Matebeleland *Gukurahundi* clean-up operations, aimed at re-domesticating women and consolidating male power. I argue that Vera utilises the Matebeleland *Gukurahundi* as a discursive space to renegotiate a desirable African masculinity embodied with *unhu-ubuntu* ethics as illustrated by Cephas Dube. The study promises a new man and a new woman who are interdependent and supportive of each other. This chapter indicates how independence promises by the nationalist patriarchy represent "cruel hope", labelled cruel hope because this hope is not fulfilled during this period.

In Chapter 6 both women and men undertake a challenging quest, encompassing both the quest for survival of their relationships and the satisfaction of their material, everyday needs, in Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope*, Phiri's *Highway Queen*, Gappah's *An Elegy for Easterly* and Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*. I examine the everydayness (becoming a state of the normal) of the deepening Zimbabwean gendered crisis, and argue that this politically (en)gendered crisis forces women to make choice-less choices, influenced by the need for material survival. The literary study reveals that while men are emasculated and crumble when they fail to find jobs, women are adaptive and creative enough to sustain their families. Fearing a loss of power, the authorities launched operation *Murambatsvina* – a man-made disaster that intersects with the HIV/AIDS virus natural disaster, rendering the marginalised vulnerable. The study reveals the unmanageability of everyday life, but the gender players in this game are reconstituted by the crisis and have become resilient woman and vulnerable man respectively.

This thesis demonstrates how opportunities open up for women writers to renegotiate, contest and re-inscribe gendered images, and that women have the necessary tenacity to achieve this. Women writers contest and counter gender images created and circulated by colonial authorities, male literary tradition and nationalists, by re-creating different literary gender roles for both men and women. This thesis demonstrates some progress in the field of Zimbabwe gender studies, but at times it is a halting, and only marginally successful struggle within the represented historical transitional moments.

Postlude

The study reveals that Lessing's Mary is a literary precursor of the asexual Tambu, who grows up into adulthood without having had a boyfriend or sex, and hates boys' conceitedness (Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* and its sequel, *The Book of Not*). Mary is also a literary precursor of Martha Quest in *The Children of Violence series*. Mary envisions the destruction of the farmhouse, a vision that fulfils her desire to have the domestic house destroyed. Martha Quest radically rebels against domesticity and motherhood by divorcing and abandoning her child. Martha is a literary precursor of Phephelaphi in *Butterfly Burning* who quests for education and aborts herself when pregnant, eventually setting herself and the shack house on fire when pregnant again, in order to escape domesticity. Martha is a precursor of Nyasha in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, who radically challenges patriarchy, uses anorexia as a form of radical resistance to partriarchal domination and marriageability, and eventually ends up having a nervous condition that takes her to a psychiatrist. Thenjiwe also exercises radical sexual freedom and refuses to be tied down to a permanent relationship with Cephas, while her aunt Sihle refuses marriage in *The Stone Virgins*. The study reveals that contemporary post-colonial rebellious literary women are literary daughters of Martha Quest.

Each dispensation provides a complex context, having outcomes in the literary individual's life and the interrelationships that the novel evokes. Martha's hatred of her brother (*Martha Quest* 8) who is sent to an expensive good school ("why was it he should inevitably be given the advantages" (34), foreshadows Tambu's hatred of her brother Nhamo (*Nervous Conditions*). In Vera's *Nehanda*, Nehanda avoids being a mother and getting married because she is a spiritual leader. Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* presents Mary, who finds sex repulsive and has no desire for marriage or children, and who becomes the precursor of Tambu, who grows into maturity without a boyfriend in *Nervous Conditions* and its sequel *The Book of Not*. In Lessing's *Martha Quest*, Martha loses her mother when she emigrates from the farm to the city, and in *A Proper Marriage* when she divorces her husband and loses her daughter, Caroline. In Vera's *Butterfly Burning*, Phephelaphi suffers physical and emotional pain after the abortion. She has a moment of self-realisation soon after the abortion, but she loses Fumbatha's love and respects that she so

values. When pregnant again she sets herself on fire, destroying herself and the house. Momentary triumphalism is portrayed as a flying bird with wings in the horrific scene when she is on fire, but the tragedy of her death is seen as the fire dies and the burned body collapses. In Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, Tambu undertakes a quest for education, but she loses her mother, feels alienated from her life in the village and also loses her language. She loses her creativity and rebellious spirit when she moves to Babamukuru's mission house. In Nyamubaya's short story "That Special Place" the heroine loses the security and safety of home and parents because of her desire to fight for the liberation of the country. In *Nervous Conditions* Nyasha's radical rebellion is destructive, and she ends up in the hands of doctors who are unable to understand the true nature of her suffering. In *The Book of Not* Tambu loses her sense of self and language and she finally ends up homeless. It is significant that Zimbabwean woman writers often use the house trope to problematize the questing figure who figuratively or literally rejects the traditional safety of homes in order to attain freedom and individuality.

This study traces the rebellious questing woman in all its chapters, and the reader weighs the cost of what is lost and gained, as female characters stake all on the attainment of individuality and freedom. The texts suggest that patriarchy has immense power and authority, such that lone battles are bound to be destructive. The characters illuminate the tension and instabilities constitutive of the heroine's subjectivity. A pattern emerges in the texts showing that there is a complex ambiguity between triumphalism and pain, illustrating how the triumphant ideology of nationalists and questing women can deceive with false redemption. The text also problematizes the male quest motif, which has been adapted to represent women's quest for freedom and individuality.

On one level, the texts seem to suggest that negotiation and engagement are ideal in the Zimbabwean context. In *Nervous Conditions*, Lucia enjoys her freedom but knows when and how to negotiate with patriarchy to get what she wants. She lives an independent life, but she looses her femininity, masculinised by patriarchy, as Babamukuru surrenders by saying she is a man. Tambu chooses Lucia as her model in *Nervous Conditions* and she manages to get what she wants: education, as she exercises her nego-feminism, negotiating and making compromises that do not derail her dream. In *The Stone Virgins*, Vera appears to advocate the interdependency of men and women as the ideally sustainable arrangement. In *The Uncertainty of Hope*, Onai is rescued by Mawaya in a utopian fairy tale ending. The texts appear to acknowledge that subjectivity is constituted relationally. Hence, they suggest that women have to know how to negotiate with and around patriarchy to realise their dreams, while transformation is needed in men in order to build a harmonious home and nation.

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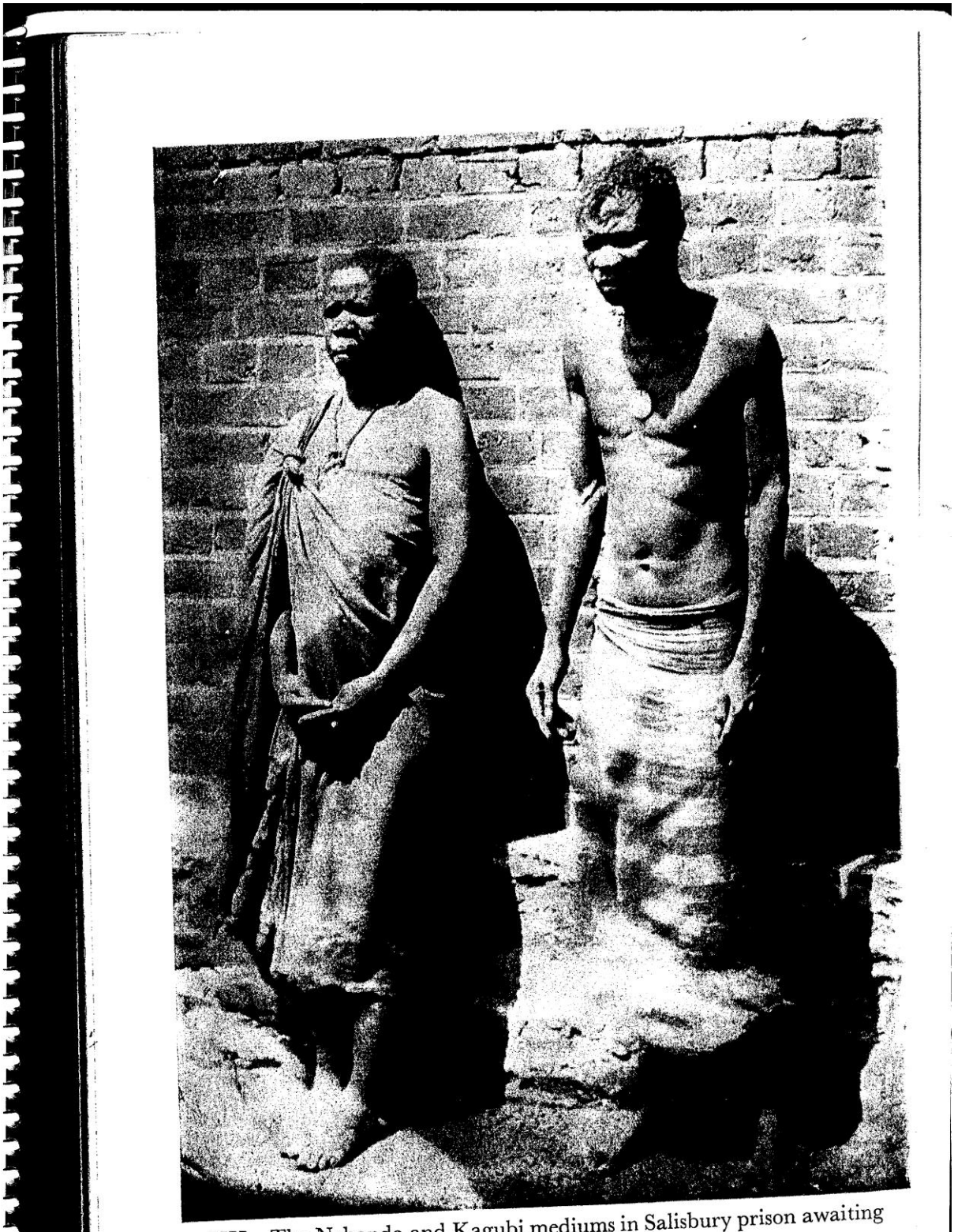
Appendix A: Frozen Image of Nehanda and Kaguvi



XII The Nehanda and Kagubi mediums in Salisbury prison awaiting execution, 1898.

Appendix B: Petina Gappah Interview

INTERVIEWER : Faith Mkwesha

INRTERVIEWEE : Petina Gappah

PLACE OF INTERVIEW: South Africa at Le Quartier Francais in Franschhoek

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 16 May 2009

FM: You are a lawyer by profession. What kind of intersections, if any, do you find between law and fiction writing?

PG: Well, there aren't any [laughs]. The short answer is there aren't any. But I believe in the simple answer because I think there can be an intersection between anything that you really think about. The kind of writing that I do is writing that came to me in part because of the kind of lawyer that I am. I had tried to write before from the time I was a fairly young girl and I had tried to write novels and that just didn't seem right, I had tried to write plays, poems and that didn't seem right. And I just didn't understand why the things I was writing just weren't working. And then when I finished my PhD, I finished my PhD at 27 (I did my Masters and PhD one after the other), and my first job was with the World Trade Organisation in a sort of tribunal where I helped to draft rulings of the judgement and I learnt the first rule of writing, which is to write cleanly, crisply, to convey complex meaning, use the most simple language, and that's what I try to do in my own writing, I write very simply. And then the other thing, the more important thing, is that there is no such thing as a perfect draft. I used to give up at the first attempt, and I learned that you always have to revise and revise and revise, so we spent a lot of time working on the first draft and polishing, polishing and polishing it, and I remember there was this one judgement that took us 37 drafts to get right, and that's how I write my stories. I'm not satisfied with the 3rd or 5th draft. I revise, revise and revise until it's as close to perfect as I can get it, and even then I sometimes think when looking at the story, "hmm, I'd like to revise that". So, to the extent that my process of working as a lawyer has assisted my process as a writer, I do see an intersection between the two.

FM: What was the genesis of your collection of short stories? What drives your creativity?

PG: Yes, I think this collection – I always say it's the most fortuitous accident that can happen because I started to write these stories in May 2006 , the first story I wrote was something based in London, and I posted it online to an online writing community and we book-critique each other and I took on board some of the criticisms and revised it again and the fourth person who read it said, "I run a literary journal online, can I publish your story?", so that was my first publication. And then my third and fourth stories I entered for the SA Pen competition and the one that came second was "At The Sound of the Last Post", the story about the widow and the acre, judged by

J.M Coetzee, so he had some nice things to say about that story, and that just encouraged me to write more and more. I ended up writing about 22 short stories in about one and a half years. I never at any time thought of them as a collective, they were just stories that I would write and place in different journals, eight different countries, and eight different journals. And then only in August last year when I was discussing my novel with my agent she said to me "Look we're still sitting on the manuscript. Why don't you put together the stories that you think best fit together, and we'll send them out together with your novel". And two days after we sent them out Faber called and said "This is how much we want to offer you, take it or leave it, by five o' clock we want an answer". So it was just the happiest of accidents, it wasn't a plan to write a collection.

FM: What are you writing for and for what purpose?

PG: Hmm. I'm writing because there are some things I want to say about a situation in a country that I – that is closest to my heart at the moment. I wrote because - a lot of the stories that didn't make it in this collection are driven by anger, and I have a lot of stories about the death of justice and all that kind of thing, that were just too polemic, too didactic, and not really subtle enough so I left those out. And I also wrote because I kept getting angry at all the headlines that suggested that Zimbabweans were just these people sitting there feeling sorry for themselves and moaning about inflation and how they were victims of Robert Mugabe, when I know that life goes on in Zimbabwe, people still get married, people, fall in love, people divorce, people have babies, people go to parties. People still do everything that they do in other situations except that it's a little more difficult in Zimbabwe than it is in other places like Switzerland for instance. I really wanted to portray that life still continues. And then I was extremely upset by the fact that Alexandra Fuller and Peter Godwin were considered to be the voice of Zimbabwe, and experts on the Zimbabwe crisis and that the Zimbabwe crisis only had one face and that was the white face, and this idea that whites were the first victims of Mugabe and the only victims of Mugabe upset me a little bit, and so I also wanted to show that there is another way of looking at this crisis. And I also wanted to put this crisis in its context, that Mugabe didn't just wake up after 2000 and become a dictator. This has been long in the evolution.

FM: That's interesting, why have you chosen to write in English as a Shona speaker, and what challenges and opportunities does the language present you with as a writer?

PG: I think the only time I thought about not writing in English was when I read Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Decolonizing the Mind* and that set me back by about two years because I didn't feel I could write in English, because I just felt that, as an African writer, I just felt I had to write in Shona. But I really wish I hadn't held myself back in that way because English is my language,

for better or worse, it's like my computer or the technology I use, they come from another country but they're mine because I've chosen them as my tools, and English is, for me, the most natural language in which to write . I will write in Shona, but I'm not very good at narrative. I'm very good at dialogue. Because I think I've developed a good ear for how people speak. Whenever I go home people are shocked because I like to, I use ETs [emergency taxis] all the time. And I think a lot of people don't understand that I'm just really keen to get the outlook on how people speak, I'm very focused on slang and how language develops on the street. And ever since the billion dollar note came out I wanted to know what the slang term was and of course it was '*biza*'. So I will write in Shona one day but it will probably be a screen play because screen plays are dialogue driven, or a play of some kind, or maybe a TV serial, but I don't think I would ever write a novel in Shona, that is simply not my medium.

FM: How do you see your role as a Zimbabwean African woman writer? Do you consciously write as a Zimbabwean woman?

PG: It's hard not to write as a Zimbabwe woman because it is what I am, so obviously my whole view is influenced by the fact that I see injustice around me everywhere I go to in Zimbabwe. I used to be a very radical student when I was at the University of Zimbabwe. I don't know if you recall that famous miniskirt demonstration in 1993 when a student from Germany, a black girl, who was studying in Germany, came in a nice little short skirt and some boys ripped it off because they thought she was underdressed and I organized a march, me and my best friend, Jessie Fungai Majome, who is now Deputy Minister of Justice for the MDC. We organized a march around the campus, Welshmen Ncube joined us and some professors, and a lot of other girls, some of us wore short skirts and some of us wore trousers but the point was we wanted to show that women have a right to wear what they want without being disrespected. So I've always, I considered myself at university as a radical Marxist, Leninist, feminist, and I was very much into the process of using law to achieve social change in Zimbabwe – the legal age of majority which I thought was a seminal piece of legislation, all the laws of succession, all the laws on the guardianship of minors. So I've always felt very strongly about social injustice in Zimbabwe. I was a rabid, rabid, rabid opponent of *lobola* and I used to have massive arguments with my father, which was quite ridiculous because I was like 18, and there was no way that I was going to get married but I still argued so fiercely about it [laughs]. So yes, I mean being a Zimbabwean woman has really informed my world-view especially since one point in my life I was really a radical feminist. Um, but I am also not blind to the faults of women, I sometimes think that we are our own worst enemies, the small-house phenomenon, for instance.

FM: I am glad you articulated it because I wanted to bring it out but could not find writers who openly talk about it yet it has become a common phenomenon.

PG: I wanted to, I wrote a story about a woman who is afraid that her husband has been cheating on her, and at the same time she is married to someone who was, you know she was this person's third wife, so she had also had another woman who was there before her. So inasmuch as we fear the hurt that other women cause us, we also cause each other a lot of pain and there's a lot of judgement. You know you go to a party in Zimbabwe and its like "what is she wearing?", that kind of thing, and it's this tedious thing that people "Oh Nhingi ", and then "what is she wearing?", you know its just such a petty environment and, um, so I present a lot about what is done to women and also what women do to each other, and what women do to children, especially stepchildren. That's something that really I feel very strongly about. One of my next novels is going to look at this whole step-family notion.
FM: How does your current locational distance from Zimbabwe impact on all your writing?

PG: Now that's an excellent question and it's one I've been asked quite a few times during the course of this literary festival and I think it's two things. First of all, if you talk to Zimbabwean writers in Zimbabwe, you would know how much of a struggle daily life is, that you really have to hustle your way into daily existence, so sometimes the writing takes a back seat. So, because I'm in a relative position of privilege and comfort and security I'm able to, you know, focus more on the writing, so I don't need to worry about earning money and all the rest of it. Also, because I'm not actually in Zimbabwe, I can afford to take a more satirical look at the politics, because I'm safer, I don't really think for a moment that all people here read fiction, but if they did, then the distance makes me a little safer, I think. But, more importantly, I think, it affords me an objective view of Zimbabwe, it's like looking at myself from outside, it's like having an outer body experience. When you are anywhere in any situation you don't really look at yourself, but once you take yourself out of your situation you go, "Hmm. Is this how I really do things; is this how I really think?", and then you compare with other people that you might meet, because I live in a very global city where I have friends from god knows how many cities and it's so interesting to see the departures and the connections especially since people make so many assumptions about "being African", but God we're different, we're very different. There are many, many commonalities that we have but we are also very, very different, so for me it's also been very instructive to live in a situation where I can compare Zimbabweans with other people.

FM: So do you think your book might ever be taught in Zimbabwean schools and universities? How important is the local readership to you?

PG: Oh it might be. Because there's no issue more important than education. Let me address the teaching first. I invited David Coltart to my launch; he's now the Arts and Education minister, and he was very positive. He's very kind, said some very nice things, but he couldn't make it because he had another commitment. And then he asked for a meeting with me, because there's a lot I want to do to promote literacy in Zimbabwe. I wanted to help to establish more lending libraries – I can get all sorts of free books from where I live, going into Zimbabwe, going into the rural areas, I wanted to meet with him to talk about that, which brings me to the question of readership. I've just been on a panel, I don't know if you were there, we were talking about the importance of reading, and developing a reading culture. We used to have it in Zimbabwe, but because of poverty, because people can't afford to buy books, we are losing that and so we are not passing it on to our children, so for me it is absolutely essential that even though my book is published in the United Kingdom, it be made available in Zimbabwe. I have ordered at my own cost 250 copies, 50 of them will be going to libraries and some schools, and about another 20 will go to journalists and other reviewers and another to people like Rubie Mogosvongwe, from UZ [University of Zimbabwe]. [Musaemura] Zimunya is coming to do the keynote speech and he's going to get a free copy and so the entire English Department is going to get a free copy, and some schools that I went to will get free copies, libraries will get free copies. And then I'm going to make about 150 available at the launch for the marked down price of about 10 dollars – I actually thought it was too expensive but I thought that is the price for a pizza, so I said just give them the pizza and buy the book. But then I talked to my distributor in Harare and they're going to sell it for 20 dollars and I was like – [makes chocking sound] but she thinks that it will sell. I saw Obama's book going for 40 dollars. It's ridiculous. Absolutely ridiculous. So for me it's also essential to have a readership in Zimbabwe. I write for the Zimbabwean market and the reason we have so few right now is because we're waiting for the paperback version because it's going to be a smaller, cheaper mass-market version coming out in January 2010, and it's going to be even cheaper – we're going to sell it at about 5 dollars a copy, and with that version I'm even willing to have even more free copies and like just jump on an ETs and say "would you like a book?" [laughs].

FM: Have you been influenced by other Zimbabwean women writers, and in what ways?

PG: Yes. You know I had a very schizophrenic childhood because my first, my A,E,I,O,U, I learned at Gambiza school in Glen Norah under Ian Smith in 1978. In 1979 we moved to Guda schools after Ali Mazrui started building new schools. Guda was a new school, now its not called that anymore, and then the following year in 1980 we moved to Alfred Bay school, which was predominantly a white school and I was one in four black kids in a class of white, white children. It was paradise. Every classroom had its own library and the school itself had a library, and just

across the road was the Queen Victoria Memorial Library, which was really massive. It was just perfect. That was how I developed a reading culture because suddenly there were all these books. I always loved to read but I never really had access. But what that meant was that I had a very white view, a white point of view, the only black people I'd read until I was in grade 7 were from the mind of HR Haggard – *King Solomon's Mines*, that was the only book I'd read with black people. Until my teacher, and this is where the importance of a good teacher comes in, my first black teacher, Mr. Makwarima –

FM: Mr. Makwarimba?

PG: Makwarimba, yes. He gave me *Things Fall Apart*. That was the first book by a black person that I'd read and the first book involving Africans, and it was mind-blowing and so I said give me more, give me more. And unfortunately he gave me Richard Wright, *Native Son*, where a man rapes and chops up a white girl and burns her in a furnace. It gave me nightmares – I was 12! It was too advanced for me. But then he started giving me things like *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and those other African writers and it truly opened up my mind. And then, thankfully, my parents took me to a mission school, where I explored my reading even more because they had massive collections of entire African writers.

FM: In your story "Mupandawana Dancing Club", M'dara Vitalis dances himself to death and people are cheering him on. That is something; what exactly are you trying to communicate here?

PG: That story is based on a true story, you know when Chiyangwa took over G and D Shoe Company, then it was closed later and the workers got a pair of shoes without any pension. So, I just wrote what I got from the newspaper headline when it happened, it was written "Man dances self to death"

FM: What is your comment on the current transitional government in Zimbabwe, and what role do you think women and men should play in the new Zimbabwe.

PG: It's a pity because MDC has taken the same stance as Zanu PF. Where were you during the liberation struggle? For MDC, it's were you at the Zimbabwe grounds? Where are your scars for the fight for democracy? I do not trust politicians; it's the ordinary people, men and women, who will change things.

FM: Why did you give the collection the title of the second story?

PG: Elegy is about the will of the people to survive – their resilience, sense of humour, determination to survive. There are many things I do not like about Zimbabweans, for example, the treatment of stepchildren and housemaids.

[pause]. It's a pity you didn't ask me about religion. My stories are about Catholics, Mapostori, Buddhists, etc. I am interested in religion and the effect it has on individuals, and completely fascinated by Mapostori.

FM: How critical are gender issues to you as a writer? Are you conscious of presenting certain images of Zimbabwean women, and Zimbabwean men in your writing.

PG: I am concerned with the situation of women…..

FM: What next? I believe you are working on a novel, can you tell us a bit about it.

PG: I am writing a novel with some flashback to the past of the war and the present. It is set in Chikurubi and I explore race through a different perspective, that of *murungu dunhu* – albino, and it's about the dislocation and set in the 1990s.

Appendix C: Alexandra Fuller Interview

Interview: Faith Mkwesha (FM)
Interviewee: Alexandra Fuller (AF)
Venue: Le Quartier Francais - Frenschhoek in South Africa
Date: 16 May 2009

FM: Okay, um do you mind me, um, publishing this interview after you've read it.

AF: - No, no that's fine.

FM: - and put it in the appendix of my thesis…?

AF: Sure.

FM: Okay. Thank you very much. Do you think of yourself as a Zimbabwean writer?

AF: No. [laughs].

FM: But nonetheless Zimbabwe seems to have played an important role or perhaps formative role in your writing?

AF: You know, initially I think when I wrote *Don't Let's Go to the Dog's Tonight* especially, of course I felt like I was a Zimbabwean writer, and I was closer to Africa and I'd only just moved to the States, and I felt as though, um, my identity had been so strongly, um, maintained by the experience of growing up…But I was confused by, "What does it mean to be a Zimbabwean?" [pause]. What does it mean to be a white Zimbabwean? What does it mean if I don't have a passport that says that I'm a Zimbabwean? Because I don't have a Zimbabwean passport [pause]. I have a British father, my mother's from Kenya, you know it was confusing for me to identify myself and I think in the end, now I would simply say that I am a writer; whatever story comes to me and I feel needs to be told, is the story I will tell [pause] and as a child it was definitely the story of my childhood.

FM: So how has your experience in Zimbabwe shaped your literary concerns?

AF: I think that the biggest gift of growing up in that time and watching that transition…I was eleven at Independence which I think was an important transition time because you're going from

a child to a teenager, and the country was going from one government to another, and so the change happened at the same time, and the biggest gift that it gave me was that it gave me a great, sense that, [pause] your government can lie to you (and in fact governments will lie to you, it's their job) and also it gave me a very strong, um, passion for a sense of (in)justice [pause]. I mean it's continuing and I still think, um - Anyway, I think that's how it initially shaped me, and it also made me realize that one person can make a difference [pause]. One person can point out that [demonstrates] this is right, this isn't right, and *this* is right.

FM: How did your locational distance from Zimbabwe affect your writing and how does it impact or enable your writing (Iam talking in terms of nostalgia, distance, memory inform your representations of Zimbabwe in your first two books?

AF: I think part of what, er, got written into that was the love that I had for the country…um…because I missed it so much [pause]. Yeah, yes. Which is a disease…The disease of nostalgia I think really absorbed that work, but I also think that I had a clarity and maybe a courage that I wouldn't have had if I had stayed there because in a way – not in a way - In *every* way, both of those books are an extremely candid look at my own people, in a way that I don't think they all appreciate…

FM: Were you influenced by any Zimbabwean writers?

AF: Of course…

FM: Zimbabwean women writers…

AF: Oh the women? Well, I didn't read Tsitsi and Yvonne until after I had *Don't Let's Go to the Dog's Tonight* but by the time I had written *Scribbling the Cat* I was most influenced - and I hate so tell you this – but by a man: it was *Echoing Silences* by Alexander Kanengoni – that for me was the greatest influence. It was such a courageous book. Um, Tsitsi's work I think it mostly influenced the language, she gave me the courage to use the language. Even when she's writing in English [pause] her rhythm and her use of language sounds like Shona actually. Um, Yvonne Vera I found almost impossible to read and so wordy [pause]. Yeah.

FM: How central are gender concerns to you as a writer in particular?

AF: Oh! What a good question. You know I write about men, more than I write about women, but I think I write about how in […] - I think underlying everything, is the way that women, all the way from Doris Lessing through to (there's another woman writer, her name is Wendy Kann,

she's also a white Zimbabwean, she wrote a memoir called *Casting with a Fragile Thread*), Tsitsi Dangarembga, Yvonne Vera, all of them, talk about in the context of the white woman, your sense of imprisonment in an open-air prison. You're imprisoned by your gender. You're imprisoned by this idea that you're not supposed to fraternize. I mean I'm talking historically pre-1980 probably. So you're imprisoned by the constraints of the society and there is, I think when there's an oppression of a minority in general, women are caught up in that and so the hierarchy runs like this: "white men/white women; black men/black women" and you know [pause] the prime oppressors were these white men, who could control everything and everyone, um, [pause] I think that that bubbles up, but it's under the surface of my work, it's not primary. Although I am, you know, personally, politically, of course I'm a feminist. But the book I've just written is about a man. So I don't know what's wrong with me really [laughs]…

FM: [laughs]. Uh, so do you think that your feminism also impacts on your whole construction of characters?

AF: Yes, because I think my primary concern is with peace.

FM: With peace?

AF: and justice.

AF: And uh, and I think those concerns are primarily female concerns. I'm not saying that men can't have them, and that women can't be warriors. I mean look at Sarah Palin.

FM: And are you concerned about representations of femininity and masculinity or you are as concerned about engaging with representations of masculinity through your representation of male characters?

AF: [sigh] Listen, I don't think it's a gift to men to be -
[AF turns to someone:] - You're making me very uncomfortable sitting here staring at me Eugene -
[back at FM:] - I don't think it's a gift of men to be given the role of soldier; "rough man", those kinds of things, but I think that the society creates those descriptions, including the mother, including the sister, including the wife. And I think we need more women in power, and I'm not talking about Grace Mugabe, not that kind of woman. I'm talking about people like Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf or Wangari Maathai.

FM: So as a feminist how do you think having women like that, can be achieved when your writing is focusing on men, how appropriate is it to write about men?

AF: Well, well. Hmmm. I don't think we can separate -, as feminists, I don't think we can separate out women to - , or I don't think we can separate out men from the context of our society. Um, and, I don't choose my stories – they choose me [pause]. And so the stories I was given - as Bessie [Bessie Head]/Lessing once said, someone said to her "How can you write the stories you write?", "Why don't you write more about the oppression?", "Why do you write those stories?" and she said "I write because I have the authority from life to do so" and I think what she was saying by that was that the life that she was given gave her the authority to tell the stories that she told.

FM: The title of your story *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* and the short story "Cocktail House Under the Tree of Forgetfulness" you wrote about your mum, were you conscious of this?

AF: I didn't think I was writing about my mother, I was writing about myself. It was an accident [sigh]. She hasn't forgiven me [laughs].

FM: [laughs]. at least you have given her a voice [laughs].What kind of commentary are you making about marriage and motherhood considering the circumstances of your mother in Don't Let's Go to the Dog's Tonight?

AF: In *Don't Let's Go to the Dog's Tonight*?

FM: Yes

AF: I think if she had made choices for herself, not choices made for her by the government, not choices made for her by her husband, not choices made for her by her society, she would have allowed herself to be in control- I think that's what drove her to madness, was that she didn't insist on her own identity as a woman, and as a mother to protect her children, as a woman to protect her own self, and as a woman to deny the power of war. She engaged that war [pause] and I think that that drove her to madness.

FM: And that madness - she goes to the squatters -

AF: - Pregnant

FM: And she [laughs] and I thought that was very brave […] She does something about it she's not just sitting, giving in to masculinity in terms of control and protection.

AF: Wow. Um. [pause] Ja, but it was still a kind of madness. It was driven by a kind of madness. Because she wasn't just fighting for her land. I mean maybe she was but I don't know, I don't know, I mean I certainly didn't go out to make a comment about marriage or [pause] – well, okay so what I think though, is that from the very beginning she has fought for herself it's not like she didn't go through in Kenya so she knew what was coming. She was - [pause] she knew. So, what prevented her from looking critically at her own life the way I did? And say "well let me see a way to go forward" that perhaps wouldn't include that kind of […]

FM: Do you think it's because she didn't have a voice. Her husband saying let's go there, let's go there and listening to her husband all the time?

AF: Ya. Right. Of course she did, and that was the time, that era, you know. You listen to your husband, you didn't decide for yourself what you were going to do, I think there was a certain naivety.

FM: Do you think now that times have changed that it's easier for women to have a voice?

AF: Women have always been able to have a voice. I look at Doris Lessing who got up and left her husband and her two children, and how difficult that must have been – unbelievable. And you know, John Wisdom, her son, is my mother's very good friend [pause] they live near each other, yeah. Um, but I think. I mean, I think that your options were about stuff. Like for her to not be – I mean if you were to be white and in Rhodesia in that time you more or less had to comply with the government that was in power then, or you needed to leave. So I'm not sure, um, I'm not sure she had choices, in that way. I mean I'm sure she had the choice to go to England, but that's not where she wanted to be. That wasn't the land she loved, it wasn't the land she was prepared to fight for. She hates England.

FM: In the short story you wrote "Cocktail House Under the Tree of Unforgetfulness"

AF: Yes, yes, yes. - Apostles, dressed as Edvard Munsch, yeah.

FM: and she -

AF: - She's never given up

FM: Her fighting spirit its like when you have that kind of madness, then you can do what you want. There's a form of madness it's, like saying that once you get into the consciousness of madness then you can get what you want and can do anything. There's a form of madness in which you can speak out.

AF: Right. But what I also see with her is that it doesn't lead to anywhere good.

FM: Okay [laughs]

AF: Do you know what I mean? If it was effective, that would be great. But it's not effective, it's not creative. It doesn't build [pause] a community. It creates friction and fraction.

FM: And then regarding your presentation of the Rhodesian soldier's story in *Scribbling the* Cat: what was your motivation for this in terms of gender and as well as the national story?

AF: Because I met this man, and I realized there were all these damaged men all around, having completely tideous relationships with women, abusive [pause] relationships with women and with wine [pause]. The fact that he has to put himself in isolation, because he couldn't function in society anymore, and there are more than one man like that, and it's not just men who are in our own lives, if you read *Echoing Silences*, it's men who came out of Zanu PF, it's men who have been to war, you know what I'm talking about…

FM: Hegemonic masculinity.

AF: Yes, and I think that in a war, women become a victim of war, but they remain victims of war after the war's ended because the wives have to live with these men and I think he was tortured by what he did, to the village women, you know [pause], that awful scene.

FM: Let's look at the theme of madness you bring out again. Are you saying thinking too much about the past will lead you to madness?

AF: No, I think that if you, hmmm [pause]. I think the unacknowledged [pause], I think if you drive through your life with the guiding beliefs that are based on women, it's a finite game. At the end of it, there'll be a winner, and a loser. I think it drives you to madness because it's always at the back of your mind that "I might be the loser". And if you're the winner "what am I going to do with it"? And I think that can make you really depressed [pause]. And what if you've lost?

What if you've killed someone and you've made that choice? I think that's a terrible, terrible value.

FM: How have your books been received in Zimbabwe?

AF: I don't know, I don't know Faith. *Scribbling the Cat* people found very difficult. I think it exposed the kind of wounded people that no one wants to talk about and *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* people read it like it's their childhood memory, they love it. I'm always shocked by that. Either that or that it's eerie. I always have people say to me "couldn't you have waited till we all died before you wrote that?" [laughs].

FM: Okay, so what about the title *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight,* what is the significance of the title in relation to the themes in your story?

AF: So you know "going to the dogs?"

FM: Yes

AF: So, "*Don't* let's go the dogs" because there's that epitaph at the beginning of the book "don't let's go the dog's tonight for mother will be there", so I think a sense that there's no point going to the dogs - my mother had already gone there, had already done that. I mean she really did. I'm very like my mother - she's passionate, she loves to read, she's more intelligent than I am. She's well-informed, she loves animals, you know there's a lot of fabulous qualities she has but this overriding blinding passion which has been really devastating for her, it has. And I said to her, you know […] I don't know [pause]. It's too late now. You can't go - I mean, imagine: I took her to a psychologist and she fell to pieces. Imagine.

FM: But um, [pause] do you ever consider going back to Zimbabwe sometime when things change, Or coming back to Southern Africa?

AF: I do [pause], but I also know life can be beside things. I used to be determined that I'd come back because I missed it so much. Especially Zambia, I missed Zambia terribly. It's become complicated. They never have a war. Have you been up there? It's a very different feeling isn't it?

FM: Yes, they stayed for a long time with KK but now they're looking for a change, a certain level of democracy.

AF: Yeah, And even when it wasn't democratic at least it was social humanist . KK was a very benign dictator. If you were going to have a dictator, he was a good kind [laughs].

FM: In your recent book you shifted from Zimbabwe to America. Will you return to Zimbabwe even as a setting, engaged in the crisis taking place or you have moved on?

AF: You know [pause] if I had lived through the last eight years in Zimbabwe I would feel like I had that authority, but I haven't. And I think that falls to some of the younger writers. I think the tragedy of that kind of madness is that the first ones to go are the schools, the teachers, anyone with a brain. It's systematic brain-drain. So who is left to record this? And freedom of speech is so compromised and so who's got the courage, I mean, to stand up to that man? Tsvangirai, and Mungoshi …has gone. So who's left to witness? Because ultimately that's your job as a writer, is to bear witness.

FM: Others who are going to write from another centre. I understand you wrote 8 novels before having your novel published?

AF: Ten, ten! [laughs]

FM: Before - *Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight, so w*hat kept you going?

AF: When I wrote *Let's Go* I didn't think anyone was going to read it. I just wrote it for myself.

FM: I enjoyed reading it. Its a childhood novel, it made me relook at how we take many things forgranted.

AF: You grew up in Harare? Where abouts in Harare?

FM: We lived in Domboshava our rural home up to grade 4.Then we had to move to Harare during the war, my father had a shop so the war veterans would come to get staff, but later they were wanted to kill him because they thought he was selling them out. So my niece who was a chimbwido sniked from the rally and came to tell my father that they were coming to kill him, and they came that night but he had gone to hide. So, we had to move.
AF: To Harare?

FM: Yes, to Highfield then later to Mablereign.

AF: Oh, Mabelreign.

AF: So are your parents still there?

FM: My father passed away in 1991, my mother is?

AF: How is she handling what's going on?

FM: She's finding it very difficult. Very depressing, everything is difficult. But um, looking at the narrative voice in *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, Why did you choose to write from that childhood voice?

AF: Because when you're a child, it let me give a literal story of what was going on. When you write from an adult voice then I think you have to interpret. How do I interpret the war, that kind of racism, or alcoholism? [pause] There's no safe way to interpret it because on one level I love these people, I might not agree with what they did, but I love them, and they're my people. So from a child you accept to love them anyway you don't care, what they are or who they are, so I think it let me give a sense to the reader of what it was like to be there then - not from my perspective as an adult because the fact is my idea of what it was like is very different, when I was there you just accept it as a child.

FM: What do you see as being the role of women writers in the near future? Should the story find you or should you look for the story?

AF: Both. Both. Because it's only by looking for a story that the story can find you. If you sit in your chair and wait no story will find you. You have to get up and go explore the world. I think, yeah.

FM: Should I look forward to one day seeing you writing about a woman as the main character?

AF: [laughs]. Um, I don't know. No, – I don't knowFaith. I know, because all of Doris Lessings' are women, isn't it? Dangarembga and Vera. So I'm the only one.

FM: men do come in but not as the main characters.

FM: [laugh] I'm intrigued and excited that you are a feminist. What do you think are the successes of the feminist movement especially in relation to narrative? What do you think has been the impact of the movement in terms of gender?

AF: [pause].Wow […] I tell you what I've noticed. Everywhere that there is – for example, the book I've just wrote about the oil worker being killed - the ones who stand up to object are the women, the mothers and the sisters and the wives. The men don't because the men are out there working. And I think it does fall on the women to tell the story and really the story is important […] The cowboy book that I've just wrote is told - I mean I can't separate [pause] I think the thing for me is as a women I can't separate – [pause]. I'm not a feminist because I hate men. I'm a feminist and I love men. You know, 99% of them. There's 1% off, but then there's one percent of women who I don't love, so it's not for me a separate thing. So I think as a feminist you [pause] can't separate out both – I mean for me, its more about being a mother than it is than being a woman. It's more about giving my children, and all children, equal rights. It's about being a matriot, not a patriot. So, a matriot says "I will fight for the rights of all children across the globe I don't care if they're boy or girl, I don't care". A patriot says "I'll only fight for my children that belong to this country", and I think that um, for me I'm just as likely to stand up for the rights of men than rights of women. Because I think the two go together. If you empower men, you empower women. If you empower women, you enable men to be gentler. And I think that we're a long way behind in Africa and I think in part it's because we've had this paternal system of government for far too long, but its creeping, it's coming, [pause] with Wangari Maathai, whom I'm a very big admirer of. She's one of my heroes. But she's the same. She doesn't say, "You're a woman and -" I mean of course she empowers women – but that's because in Kenya men are already more empowered than women and so women who need lifting up, men don't need squashing down. Does that make sense?

FM: yes, just like in Zimbabwe we need to empower women more.

AF: we need to lift up women, not squash down men. And I think one of the things I point out especially in *Scribbling the Cat*, is [pause] you have a man and you give him the power to do whatever he wants and to own women – It didn't do him any good. He's a broken man. Because a man without an empowered women, he's only got one leg.

FM: So you believe in complimentarity?

AF: Of course. And anyway as a woman you have no choice what comes from your womb: A boy or a girl. So, I think raising conscious men, raising humble men, raising strong daughters, that's

your job as a woman. And standing up to husbands and I think teaching your daughters how to say no, and teaching your sons how to ask.

FM: I like that. I think I agree with you. So what is your advice to women who might want to start writing as well?

AF: You know, you have to fight for your time. Because I think women, more than men, have so many duties that come with being a woman, and you have to cut the time into your life and say "yes I might be a wife or a mother and I might have a job, but my voice and my story is important". I would wake up at three o' clock in the morning and write till seven o' clock. I'd take my kids to school, go to my job, pick my kids up from school, put them to their naps, make supper, write for another two hours, feed the kids, put the kids to bed, write some more, and so my husband never saw me, so I said "you know what, its okay". "when I've finished writing this scene".

FM: Because they complain for attention, so you're writing and feeling guilty but I feel we should be strong and determined.

AF: Of course you do, you have to assert your space and place in the world as a voice, whatever that is.

FM: So are you moving away from Zimbabwe totally, from never writing about it again?

AF: I don't know. I mean I feel if I went back to live there, I might, yes but you have to [pause] be there to pick the story and feel the urgency of the story again. I'm sure what with what Mugabe's been doing, stories come out of violence. But I also hope – one of the things I would like to do is I would want to encourage the younger women. I'm 40. You need to see the stories coming from 20 and 30 year olds as well, um, and I think that, [pause] I mean with writers like Tsitsi Dangarembga and Yvonne Vera you have a template, and of course it can be done. [pause] Have you met Petina? Because there is – I mean, she is younger than me – 30s maybe? - and there you go. Because she lives in Geneva. And that is what worries me, and that's what I like about this festival, is that it really encourages that thing, you know, it encourages writers from this area to [pause] congregate. Um, and I think that kind of encouragement, of writers, I wish we would see more black [writers…]

FM: So what can we expect from you, what are you going to be working on?

AF: I don’t know. Yeah.

FM: Well, I wish you the best your in career as a writer.

AF: Thank you, and good luck with this.

FM: And since you’ve given me your permission, I will send the copy to you.

AF: Let me give you my email address […]